RELIGION IN THE USSR

E. YAROSLAVSKY

Revised Edition

SIXPENCE

£6

RELIGION IN THE U.S.S.R.

BY
E. YAROSLAVSKY

Second and Revised Edition

PUBLISHED BY
MODERN BOOKS LTD.
FOR THE LEAGUE OF MILITANT ATHEISTS
(BRITISH SECTION, PROLETARIAN FREETHINKERS INTERNATIONAL

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1932

PRINTED IN ENGLAND

by The International Press (T.U.)
4 Pelham Street
London, E. 1

and Published by Modern Books Ltd.
53, Grays Inn Road
London, W.C. 1

PREFACE TO SECOND EDITION.

OWING perhaps to the advertisements given it in malice by the religious foes of both the working-class movement and of the U.S.S.R., the first edition of this work has been completely exhausted in a few months.

This second edition differs from the first in these particulars: (*a*) minor verbal alterations have been made in places in the introduction and the body of the work; (*b*) the concluding chapter has been entirely re-written and brought up to date by the author; (*c*) an appendix has been added recording the formation of a British "League of Militant Atheists" as urged in the introduction.

Of the many mendacities with which the religious Press has assailed this booklet, we have need to speak of one only. One pious critic, a Jesuit, affirmed that the cover design includes "a blasphemous caricature of the Deity."

We cannot speak with the authority of a member of the "Society of Jesus"—(so notorious for its scrupulous adherence to the truth!)—but to our profane eyes the only warrant for the assertion is that the Jesuit Father cannot recognize a drawing of St. Nicholas (the patron saint of Russia) when he sees one!

A Catholic writer who repeats this slander thus interprets the Papal Encyclical, "*Caritate Christi Compulsi*," referred to by Comrade Yaroslavsky in the concluding chapter of this work:

> "This is a call to action which no Catholic can disregard. . . . At every point of advance by the international forces of the 'Militant Godless,' a counter-attack led by Catholic men and women should be immediately delivered on platforms, in the local newspapers, at street corners—quite especially at street corners—at factory gates, by leaflets and pamphlets. The silver trumpets of the Vatican are blowing with no uncertain sound. Are the Catholics of England, of Europe, of America, of Australia, making ready for the battle?"

This quotation from a recent Catholic pamphlet, "Communism," by Lewis Watt, S.J., and G. M. Godden, might well be taken (with the necessary substitutions of "godly" for "godless" and "Communist," "Worker," or "Militant Atheist" for "Catholic") as our own call to battle.

T. A. J.

INTRODUCTION.

The contrast between the attitudes of the capitalist-imperialist and of the proletarian-Communist social systems is as sharp in regard to Religion as in anything.

In the capitalist-imperialist world Religion is regarded, not merely as a thing praiseworthy and admirable, but as a thing which in one form or another is indispensable and inescapable. So much is this the case, that to account for the energy and enthusiasm engendered by Communism in the U.S.S.R. and through the ranks of the militant proletariat generally, bourgeois intellectuals find it " explains " things to assert that " Communism is itself *a Religion.*"

The attitude of the Communists and of their allies who are helping in the building of the Socialist world-order is summarised in the famous phrase of Karl Marx : " Religion is Opium for the People." That of the bourgeois world is well summarised by the phrase of the Liberalistic Unitarian, Estlin Carpenter : " Religion . . . embodies man's highest thought concerning the mysteries that surround him and expresses his finest attitude to life. . . . It is the most effective agent for the slow elevation of the race."

To the one, Religion is at the best a delusion, at the worst a vice or even a disease. To the other, it is the reverse—everything implicit in the question-begging adjectives in the use of which the Unitarian Professor was so typical of his class. " Highest," " finest," " slow elevation "—these terms themselves, with their implied " reverence " in the presence of " mystery," mark off with precision the gulf which yawns between the ideologies of the now-crumbling capitalist system and that of the new world-order, among whose foremost champions is the author of this booklet, E. Yaroslavsky, the leader of the " League of the Godless."

It must not, however, be supposed that this phenomenon of militant Atheism as a mass movement is a simple extension to Russia of the anti-clericalism and Freethinking which has

appeared sporadically through the whole life-history of capitalist society.

It is notable, for instance, that the Voltairean bourgeoisie of France is as vicious in its hostility to Communism in general and the Soviet Republic in particular as is the Pope of Rome and all the little popes of all the Lutheran and Protestant Churches. Similarly, British Agnosticism and American "Liberalism" each commonly loses no opportunity of expressing dissent from the militancy of the U.S.S.R. and abhorrence for the doctrines of Communism. "Agnosticism" (described on its first appearance by a scornful critic as "Atheism with a silk hat on!") was, as Engels noted as long ago as 1892, quite "respectable" from the start. "Rationalism" and "Freethought" have, in fact, in the English-speaking countries, been little else than the intellectual toys of sectarian coteries who, in practice, formed little sects which differed from the other dissenting sects only in having shed one theological dogma the more and made up for this unorthodoxy by an extra zeal for all the material essentials of the bourgeois order.

Bourgeois "Liberal," "Freethought" and "Rationalist" societies in the English-speaking world commonly declare themselves rigidly "non-political" and depart from this, as do the anti-clerical French Freemasons, only to outvie the orthodox in their patriotic defence of the established order. Charles Bradlaugh in England, the best and most personally courageous advocate of Freethought the British bourgeoisie ever produced, was also its principal champion against Socialism and Revolution in the 1880's. Similarly, Robert Ingersoll in America was a pillar of the Republican Party.

Proletarian Freethinking, as cultivated by the League of the Godless, is, on the contrary, essentially part and parcel of the militant workers' class-struggle; basically political and revolutionary from the start. The bourgeois "Freethinkers," in fact, fought for the completion of the work begun at the first great uprising of the bourgeoisie, the Protestant Reformation. Just as in those days the fight for personal freedom was a fight for the freedom of personal property, and the fight for the "right of private judgment," one for the right to develop that property without customary church-sanctified restraints—for the right to accumulate capital free from the exactions and exploitation of a burdensome church hierarchy—so in more recent days such fight as the bourgeois Freethinkers

have put up has been limited to protesting against the cost of religion, the power of the priest in politics, and the conventional stigma upon " unbelief."

In all respects it can be said that the " Freethinkers " fought, in fact, for the more general interests of the bourgeoisie as a whole against the special interests of a subsection of that class. And it is notable that as the proletarian class-struggle has grown, and with that growth the need of the bourgeoisie to present a united front against the growing demands of the workers, so the militancy of bourgeois " Freethought " has " grown smaller by degrees and beautifully less !"

Once upon a time the bourgeoisie looked forward cheerfully to the day " when the last king should be strangled in the entrails of the last priest "; later they were vigorous in expounding the " Conflict between Religion and Science " or eloquent upon the " Mistakes of Moses " or the " Crimes of God." Nowadays these one-time " Freethinkers " explain that they object in principle to the " coercion " of Religion as practised in Russia—thereby placing themselves at once in solidarity with the Pope—while all the best-known scientists busy themselves with effecting a " reconciliation between Religion and Science." The one-time vigorous demands for Secular Education and the Disestablishment and Disendowment of the Church of England have disappeared not only from the programme of the Liberal Party, but from that of the Labour Party likewise. For all practical purposes—and more especially since leading religious dignitaries, like Canon Barnes of the Church of England, are openly eager to accept all the critical conclusions of the anthropologists and the Higher Critics, and modify their theology accordingly—the bourgeois fight against Religion has been abandoned in favour of a comfortable compromise which leaves them all, bourgeois Freethinkers and religionists alike, free to face that which they see to be their chief peril, the gathering storm of the Proletarian Revolution.

It is only in its organic connection with this latter that the workers' movement for Militant Atheism expounded herein can at all be appreciated. *The revolutionary proletariat is not concerned with a merely paper war of the old style " Freethought " kind against Religion-in-the-Abstract;* it is concerned with Religion as a concrete social fact and force—with the churches as parts of the apparatus of the bourgeois State; with the priests as members of the ruling class and

active political agents of the bourgeois order; with the churches as centres of counter-revolutionary propaganda, and active foci of division in the ranks of the proletariat; with the church congregations as potential organisation-centres for scab-herding and Fascist reaction.

Thus, it is as an integral part of the revolutionary proletarian class-struggle, as one among many battle-fronts upon which the enemies of the workers must be met, checked and defeated, that the militant workers are concerned with Religion.

Consider these points more in detail.

In both England and Scotland the Church is " established " by law—is part of the State apparatus. Religion is taught in the State schools; and schools established by various religious denominations receive heavy subsidies from the State towards their maintenance (some £28 million per annum in Britain). Bishops of the Church of England are *ex-officio* members of the House of Lords, and chaplains of the leading denominations (Anglican, Presbyterian, Catholic and Wesleyan) are appointed and paid by the State to " minister " to the Army, Navy and Air Force. Buildings used for religious purposes are exempted from local and national taxes, and the incomes of the clergy are, in part, exempt from income tax.

Then the churches are, each and all of them in their degree, property-owning corporations interested in the maintenance of rent, interests, and profits. The Church of England is one of the largest land-owning corporations in Britain, and as such is the owner of large areas of slum property and of mining rents and royalties, in addition to its remunerative right to the tithes levied upon farm produce. While it is true that the newer churches built during the last century have been poorly endowed and their clergy relatively poorly paid, the older churches, as in the City of London, are the owners of immensely valuable sites from which enormous revenues are drawn. The salaries paid to the leading dignitaries of the Church of England (£15,000 per annum to the Archbishop of Canterbury, £10,000 per annum to the Bishop of London, and so on) give a measure of the wealth of the Church and the social standing to which it aspires.

The various Nonconformist Churches are only little less wealthy; some of the more distinguished among them being able to pay their pastors salaries that compare well with those

of bishops. These revenues are drawn, not merely or even mainly from the contribution of the "faithful," but from funded property—lands yielding rents, stocks and shares yielding dividends, and bank deposits yielding interest. At all points the churches are themselves property owners, and as such interested in keeping rent, interests, and industrial profits at their maximum. It is not, therefore, to be wondered at that the churches, whatever else they may differ in, are all agreed upon the necessity for defending the capitalist order against every sort of revolutionary advance of the proletariat.

The churches are powerful propaganda agencies interested in creating "public opinion" favourable to the existing order. In mediæval days and in modern times until the general advent of the newspaper, the church was the sole agency whereby the State secured a public opinion favourable to itself and its procedure. Circumstances have deprived the church of this monopoly, but it still remains of little less importance in this regard than the Press. While the Press is more openly broadcast, the churches, through their services and their supplementary organisations—Sunday schools, mothers' meetings, boys' brigades and scout troops, girls' societies, brotherhoods, etc.—to say nothing of their grip on the schools and their social activities through such institutions as the Y.M.C.A.—are able to operate as prime agents for the manufacture of an opinion favourable to the existing order and hostile to anything likely to prejudice that order. Their activity during the war, in which virtually every cleric of every denomination became a recruiting sergeant, was only a continuation of their normal peace-time activity in expounding the doctrine that "the powers that be are ordained of God."

Their influence in the schools is notorious, and the potentiality of that influence was revealed in the famous trial at Dayton, Tennessee, at which a schoolmaster was convicted of teaching in Darwinism a doctrine subversive of belief in the Bible. The circumstances in the "Bible belt" in the U.S.A. are exceptional in that elsewhere the bourgeoisie and its churches have recognised their need of science in their everyday commercial and industrial practice; but they are quite normal in that doctrines recognised to be hostile to the bourgeois order are rigorously excluded from the schools. The expulsion from their jobs of various teachers in England who identified themselves with the General Strike in 1926, and the more recent case of

a teacher sacked for refusing to take part in Empire Day celebrations, as well as numerous similar cases in the U.S.A., are eloquent on this head. In this regard the churches function as an auxiliary police-force in close alliance with the politicians, and must be dealt with along with them.

The churches are all active agents of Imperialism. It is well known how, by means of a suitable interpretation of a Biblical text, the churches were active in defence of Negro slavery in the English colonies and the U.S.A. Similarly, the doctrines, " he who believeth not shall be damned " and " go ye into all the world and save sinners," have made the churches through their foreign missions active agencies for the spread of White ascendancy and for Imperialist expansion into all quarters of the globe. The saying of the old Maori chief typifies the process : " The missionary comes and says ' Look up !' and we look up : when we look down again, the land's gone !" Not only do the missionaries in Africa, India, China and Polynesia function as a force destructive of the native tribal solidarity, and, as such, as preparers of the ground for all sorts of capitalist exploitation; but they function actively as a force neutralising any solidarity of resistance to Imperialist aggression. In the mission field they break up native self-respect and facilitate the conversion of the natives into wage-labourers; in the home countries their propaganda provides a camouflage for Imperialist penetration and annexation; and, on occasion, when their interference with native life has provoked reprisals, an excuse for punitive expeditions and further exploitation. The cases of China, India and Africa, as well as the Philippines and Hawaii, provide numerous examples.

Finally, the churches provide active centres for the organisation of counter-revolution. The part played by the Black Hundreds and their pogroms in the suppression of the Russian Revolution in 1905 is well known and typical. So also is the part played by the same church and the same bands in support of Kolchak, Denikin, Wrangel, and all the other " White " leaders of the civil war against the Revolution of November, 1917. That this is not peculiar to Russia and the Orthodox Church is proved by the part played by the church in resisting the Revolutionary movements in Mexico, Spain and Chili; and in inciting assaults upon Communist propagandists in Ireland.

It is against this background that we must view the repeated efforts made by the Pope to arouse a Holy War against the

U.S.S.R. In 1930 he asked for no more than a united pressure of all the Governments to secure the " restoration " of freedom of worship and of " *church property.*" In 1932 he calls upon, not only Catholics or merely Christians, but *all who believe in God*, to " unite all our forces in one solid compact line against the battalions of evil, enemies of God no less than of the human race." This is nothing less than a call for a Crusade of the mediæval kind, not only against the U.S.S.R., but against the militant proletariat everywhere. It is an attempt to make the methods of the Black Hundreds a universal accompaniment to a general war upon the U.S.S.R. It is a definitive mobilisation of the Black Army against the Red.

So far it has been the usual practice of the militant working-class movement in the English-speaking world to " leave religion alone." The subject bristled with so many difficulties and the churches work with such underhanded cunning, that it was felt usually that a raising of the question would create more difficulties than the effort was worth. But in face of the world crisis this attitude, never justifiable, is no longer even thinkable. However much we may wish to leave religion alone, religion, it is clear, will not leave us alone. On this point Lenin wrote :—

" To the proletarian Socialist party religion is not a private matter. Our Party is a league of class-conscious, progressive fighters for the liberation of the working-class. Such a league cannot and must not be indifferent to ignorance or benightedness in the shape of religious beliefs. We demand the entire separation of the State from the Church, in order to disperse the fog of religion by purely intellectual and only intellectual weapons, by our press and oral persuasion. One of the objects of our Party is precisely to fight against all religious deception of the workers. . . . Our programme is entirely based upon scientific—to be more precise—upon *materialist* philosophy. . . . Our programme thus necessarily includes the propaganda of atheism." (*Lenin on Religion* : Martin Lawrence, 1s.)

Quite apart from the frontal attack called for by the Pope, the churches everywhere are busier than ever at the work of demoralising the workers with their charity. Wesley in the eighteenth century " saved " Britain from Revolution (so his disciples claim) by his evangelicalism—by " calling in the

'Next' world to redress the balance of 'This.'" General Booth claims to have done as much in the nineteenth century by his shelters, work-depôts, and emigration agencies. The whole of the churches to-day are at work preparing to combine the methods of Booth, Wesley, and the Pope with those of the Black Hundreds and the Ku Klux Klan.

Comrade Yaroslavsky's work should teach us how imperative it is to man adequately this neglected sector of the Workers' International Battle Front.

T. A. J.

RELIGION IN THE U.S.S.R.

MILITANT ATHEISM BECOMES A MASS MOVEMENT.

The epoch-making changes which are taking place in all branches of the national economy in the U.S.S.R. must necessarily be accompanied by correspondingly sharp changes in the ideology of the great masses.

The soil that fostered the ideology of the Russian workers in the period of Tsarist reaction is now being deeply ploughed up by lumbering tractors on the collective and State farms; the choicest seeds of Leninism are being sown on a vast expanse of territory stretching over one-sixth of the surface of the globe. Years of stubborn and persistent toil have prepared this soil to receive this seed. Now that the sowers have grown up, have been trained and prepared for their task, we garner the rich harvest they sowed. Witness the mass anti-religious movement, which is one of the consequences of the enormous social-economic changes which are taking place in our country.

The programme of our Party says :—

> "The Communist Party of the Soviet Union is guided by the conviction that only the conscious and deliberate planning of all the social and economic activities of the masses will cause religious prejudices to die out completely. The Party stands for the complete dissolution of the ties between the exploiting classes and organised religious propaganda, and facilitates the real emancipation of the working masses from religious prejudices by organising the widest possible scientific, educational and anti-religious propaganda."

Thus religious beliefs will be destroyed not primarily by anti-religious propaganda, but by " the conscious and deliberate planning of all the social and economic activities of the masses."

This does not imply that the Party should or does ignore the use of anti-religious propaganda, which helps to form the new Atheist conceptions of the broad toiling masses. The basis

of this movement, however, rests on the fact that the working class is winning in its struggle against the capitalist forms of economy—that the working class is rebuilding the whole of the country in accordance with socialist ideas—that it is not the old Russia, but the workers, the most suitable standard-bearers of Atheism, the leaders of the socialist revolution, who are building giant State farms, who are building the mighty Dnieper Dam and the large Tractor works, who are marching to victory despite the malevolent plotting of the exploiters of all the world. The Pyatiletka (Five-Year Plan) in the realm of construction embodies that " conscious and deliberate planning of all the social and economic activities of the masses " which the party programme refers to as the greatest force which will bring in its wake " the dying-out of religious prejudices."

Under the leadership and influence of the proletariat, the peasants are turning to a new form of economy, socialised economy. More and more we find them adopting the new technique and freeing themselves from and subduing the dominion of the elemental forces of nature.

These victories over nature, over these elemental forces, are of paramount importance in the work of freeing the great peasant masses from the stupefying influence of religion. In a few more years the masses of peasants organised in the collective farms and State farms will, with the use of the mighty technique of the proletarian State and with the help of the mighty fertilisers at work upon new and hitherto untilled fields, be able to free themselves from the last remnants of the influence of religion which the exploiters had almost indelibly imprinted on their minds in the course of centuries.

It must be pointed out that in this process, the cultural revolution, the logical concomitant of all these profound changes in the national economy of our country, plays a very important part.

Take for example the Christmas holidays, December 25, 26 and 27. In the village of Borodino, the peasants arranged a mass festival of socialist culture. About two thousand people, poor and middle peasants, came from all parts of the country and without a single dissenting voice closed down two out of the three churches in the village. In one of them they installed machinery and turned it into a collective farm mill; in the other they opened up a home for socialist culture with

a number of assembly rooms, a library, rooms for study circles, moving pictures and radio.

But all this was made possible only because the peasant masses had joined this mighty movement and because of the influence of the mass collectivisation of the farms in this region.

Illiteracy has been almost completely wiped out in this village, and two-thirds of the adult population regularly visit the village reading room. This village reading room was set up without a single kopek being spent by the State, as was also an elementary school, another school for knitting and sewing, a living newspaper, a Young Pioneer detachment, a *crèche* for babies, and a library. Out of every three homes, two subscribe to newspapers, and in every home there are two who go to the library. *This is something entirely new in the Russian village.* Here they are making short shrift with all the vestiges of the old regime.

Hand-in-hand with this work of reconstructing our economy, we are making great progress in remoulding the *consciousness of the masses.* We see in this an assurance that the work of the Atheists will be crowned with success and this explains why militant Atheism has become not only a mass movement in the cities, but throughout the whole countryside.

This is of tremendous significance in view of the fact that all our work towards the carrying out of the Pyatiletka—the industrialisation of the country, the collectivisation of agriculture, as well as our entire cultural revolution—deals a crushing blow to all exploiters and to their influence over the toiling peasant masses. This is why our Party finds it easier sailing now than at any time before, " to," as our programme reads, " completely dissolve the ties between the exploiting classes and organised religious propaganda." The collective farmers will not go to the priest to ask him to propitiate the deity by offering up a prayer to the prophet Elijah or some other saint in the calendar. They will rely solely on the village proletariat to improve the conditions of their work, to combat drought and other elemental forces of nature which affect the well-being of the masses.

A gigantic movement is going on in the collective farms against religious organisations, in favour of dropping out of religious societies, of removing church bells, closing down

churches and remodelling them to meet the new secular-cultural requirements of the masses. Only a few months ago, this movement bore an entirely different character. Indeed, before our very eyes, quantity has been transformed into quality. There is not the slightest doubt that these two " fronts " on which we work—the destruction of the material roots of religion, and Atheist propaganda—are evidences of the many-sided activities of the proletariat which, in the aggregate, seek not only to explain the world, but to remake it.

Lenin, as early as 1909, pointed out in his article, " The attitude of the Workers' Party to Religion," that " To draw a hard and fast line between the theoretical propagation of Atheism, between breaking down the religious beliefs of certain sections of the proletariat, and the effect, the development, the general implications of the class struggle of these sections, is to reason non-dialetically; to transform a variable, relative boundary into an absolute one. It is a forcible tearing asunder of that which is indissolubly connected in reality."† While in 1909 this was true only of the advanced strata of the proletariat, to-day the situation has changed, for to-day the great masses of the working class have already been drawn into the Atheist movement. We must lay great emphasis on Lenin's words, and not " fall either into the abstract, wordy and, in fact, futile ' revolutionism ' of the Anarchist, or into the philistinism and opportunism of the petty bourgeois, or liberal intellectual, who shirks the fight against religion, forgets his tasks, reconciles himself to a belief in God, and who is guided, not by the interests of the class struggle, but by petty, mean calculations such as : not to offend, not to repel, not to frighten; and who is governed by the wise rule : ' live and let live,' etc., etc." (Ibid.)

Let us examine the most interesting facts of the mass Atheist movement of workers and peasants of yesterday and to-day. *Industrialisation Day*, which has now taken the place of the religious holiday known as the Day of the Transfiguration, has shown to what extent not only the great masses of workers, but the peasants too, are aware of the problems of industrialisation. This is a tremendously successful day. And it must be pointed out that vast numbers even of what seemed

† *Lenin on Religion*, Martin Lawrence, London. 1/-. International Publishers, New York, $0.20.

to be the most fervent religious devotees have during recent years begun to adopt anti-religious views. We see this change also among the Jews, the Mohammedans and others. On such strict Jewish holidays as the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur) and New Year's Day, they arranged special " subbotniks "† among the Jewish workers, artisans, employees and peasants, and the proceeds went to the industrialisation fund. These " subbotniks " were highly successful everywhere. The Jews who year after year had spent these same days in the synagogues now went to the factories and workshops, collected scrap iron, cleaned up the factory yards or worked in the fields. After this first " Industrialisation Day " a great deal of anti-religious work began. There is no doubt whatever that the resolutions of the Second Congress of Militant Atheists which laid down as its fundamental plan that the Union of Militant Atheists must become a mass Atheist organisation, played a very great part in effecting the changes which have taken place recently. The membership of the Union of Militant Atheists has more than doubled in a year and a half. In Kronstadt, for instance, prior to the anti-Christmas campaigns, it had six thousand members, whereas after the campaign the membership rose to ten thousand. The newspaper " *Bezbozhnik* " (The Atheist) increased its circulation to 350,000. This increased interest was largely due to the initiative of a large number of organisations which until then had been rather indifferent to the necessity of anti-religious propaganda.

All the information we have bears out the fact that at Christmas, whether celebrated by the " old " Church or the " new," the masses of the workers went to work in the factories and mines, while the masses of the peasants, particularly in the collective farms, prepared for their work in the fields. The information that came from the factories attested the fact that everything was running as usual. In many factories the number of workers who were absent without good reasons was even lower than usual. For instance, in Moscow, in factories Nos. 6 and 7 of " Emancipated Labour " there were two unexcused absences out of a force of 1,500; in " Electrozavod," 22 out of 6,000 (usually more than 60); in the Markov factory, 2 out of 2,000; in " Hammer and Sickle,"

† Urgent communal work performed voluntarily and gratuitously outside of working hours or on days of rest.

89 out of 6,300; in the Basakov cable factory, 3 out of 6,900; in the "Dynamo" works, 9 out of 2,500. We see a similar situation in Tver, in Leningrad, in Tula, in Briansk, in Rostov-on-Don, in Odessa, in the Urals, and in all the other great industrial centres.

The extensive work done in this direction gave results which considerably exceeded our expectations. A large number of towns and villages have passed resolutions to take down the bells from all their churches, and have put these resolutions into effect. Towns like Samara, Kherson, Krasnoyarsk, Kharkov, Kaluga, Archangel, Briansk, Artemovsk, Ulyanovsk, Tver, and others, passed resolutions calling for the removal of all church bells and their surrender to the industrialisation fund.

Such resolutions were also adopted and carried out in numerous villages. For example, the peasants in the Ulyanovsk and Kuznetsk districts took down all the church bells and handed them over to the factories. The money received for the metal was paid as a deposit for tractors. Five hundred poor and middle peasants of one village decided to remove the bells from the churches, confiscate all church funds and hand them to the State in payment for tractors. The peasants in the village of Kraskovo, Ukhtomsky region, passed a resolution in favour of closing all the local churches, taking down the bells and selling them, giving 50 per cent. of the proceeds to the village collectivisation fund, 25 per cent. to the poor peasants' fund and 25 per cent. for the collectivisation of the region.

One village meeting decided to proclaim the village to be Atheistic, to close down the church and expel the priest and his deacon; elsewhere resolutions were passed to melt down all the church bells and to place five churches and two synagogues at the disposal of the educational authorities. "Let us hear the rumbling of the tractors instead of the clanging of bells," read part of the resolution passed at one village meeting. In the Odessa region alone about 100 Atheist villages cropped up.

We could continue to cite instances like the above *ad infinitum*. That these church bells can yield more than 300 thousand tons of non-ferrous metals of which we are so much in need for our industrialisation is not so striking as the political

significance of this movement; *because this is indeed a movement created by the masses*, which, we must admit, has exceeded all our expectations.

It ought to be borne in mind that the religious organisations were somewhat taken by surprise by this movement. They were so sure of their strength. They carried on, and continue to carry on counter-revolutionary activity.

Recent trials like those of the Fyodorivists, Imyaslavists, the " Union for the Liberation of the Ukraine," etc., have shown what an active part the church has taken in counter-revolutionary activities. But at the same time we see that the clergy in a number of places are abandoning their calling. In Voronezh, after *repeatedly* exhibiting the bones of " saints " and the crude deceptions practised by the clergy in connection with them, one priest publicly declared that he refused to humbug the people any longer and stripped off his priestly robes on the spot. Frequently, in the newspapers, we read announcements to the following effect :—

> " I, ———, a priest, have served in the ——— church for ——— years, and now am convinced and realise that religion interferes with the building of socialism and stupefies the minds of the peasants and the working class. Therefore, I desire to stop deceiving and stupefying the peasants and workers. I therefore abandon my calling of priest and call upon all other members of the clergy to follow my example."

Instances of people dropping out of religious communities for good are multiplying; in fact, they are assuming a mass character. The clergy and the lay members endeavour to retain their congregations by the wildest schemes imaginable. The Adventists, for example, circulated leaflets written by a former colonel named Beinengen, bearing the following inscription : " Courage, brethren, for lo ! I am coming soon ! " This Second Advent and the terrible Day of Judgment that was to follow were due, according to this ex-colonel, at the end of the first Pyatiletka, i.e., 1932-1933. Religious sects are active everywhere. A sect known as the *Stephanidka*, led by a certain Seraphima Popova, called upon the women workers in the Ugo-Kamsky factory not to subscribe to the industrialisation loans because the money, she said, would fall into the clutches of the Anti-Christ. But this agitation is of no avail. The

masses, as we have seen, are turning away from religion and the priests.

What are the conclusions to be drawn from this mass movement? Does it mean that we can let things run on of their own accord, and slacken the work of organising anti-religious propaganda and widening its scope? This Atheist movement has become a movement of the masses, and it must be strengthened.

We should not imagine that we have already abolished religion and religious organisations. We have fulfilled a great task up till now. In 1913, Lenin wrote an article entitled: "Three Sources and Three Components of Marxism," in which he wrote:—

> "The advocates of reforms and progress will always be fooled by the defenders of the past as long as they fail to understand that every old institution, regardless of how barbarous or decayed it may seem to be, is supported by the strength of this or that ruling class. And there is *only one way to crush the opposition of these classes and that is to find such forces in the very society that surrounds us, to enlighten and organise such forces for the struggle as can and must, because of their social position, contain the force capable of tearing down the old and creating the new.*"—(Lenin; *Collected Works*, Vol. XVI.)

We have found this force: this force is the proletariat and the toiling peasant masses which are following its leadership in increasing numbers. This is the force which is capable of "tearing down the old and creating the new." But these peasant masses which accept the leadership of the proletariat require a great deal of care. Lenin, in a speech he delivered at the Third Congress of the Young Communist League on October 4, 1920, referred to this. He said:—

> "The proletariat must re-educate part of the peasantry and train them anew; it must win over the toiling peasants in order to destroy the opposition of the wealthy peasants who are getting rich by taking advantage of the poverty of the others."—(Lenin; *Collected Works*, Vol. XXV.)

This task of retraining and re-educating the peasants, and with it the partial re-education of the working class itself, now confronts us :—

> " Education in alliance with the proletariat against the egoists and small private owners, against the psychology and the habits that would have us say, ' I am out for my own advantage, and I don't care about anything else.' "—(Ibid.)

Those who argue that up till now, we have used only " light artillery " in our anti-religious propaganda, and that now we must use " heavy artillery "—Marx, Engels and Lenin—are wrong. Our party programmes and all our resolutions regarding the question of religion are permeated with the spirit of this " heavy artillery "—Marx, Engels and Lenin. The point is that now the scope of our activities has become much wider since the masses have awakened and are joining the movement. We must work untiringly to develop a consistent materialistic philosophy among the masses. And Lenin repeatedly emphasised that :—

> " A Marxist could not make a worse mistake than to think that the many millions of people (particularly peasants and artisans) who are condemned by modern society to ignorance, illiteracy and prejudices can extricate themselves from this ignorance only by following the straight lines of purely Marxist education. It is essential to give these masses the greatest variety of atheist propaganda material—to acquaint them with facts from the most diversified fields of life. Every way of approach to them must be tried in order to interest them, to rouse them from their religious slumber, to shake them up by most varied ways and means." (Lenin, " Religion," p. 87.)

* * * * *

The Atheist movement has become a mass movement even beyond the confines of the Soviet Union. A number of facts go to prove that this movement is gaining ground also in other countries. A growth in the anti-religious movement is observed particularly among the great masses of working class Jews in Poland, Latvia, Lithuania, Belgium, England, America, Germany and other countries. In Warsaw, for example, on the Jewish New Year's Day 15 mass demonstrations were

held, which were dispersed by the police. Demonstrations were also held in Polish provincial towns, in Latvia, New York and elsewhere. Priests are beginning to complain of the drop in their incomes and of the decline of religion.

Despite, or because of, the fact that religious organisations are supported by social democratic as well as avowedly bourgeois and fascist organisations, there is no doubt whatever that the above-mentioned facts concerning the anti-religious movement will intensify the campaign of lies and slander now being waged by all the pillars of the Church against the Soviet Union. The exploiters of all countries fully realise that the experience of the work of socialist construction, which is going on throughout the length and breadth of the U.S.S.R., in town and country, will be of enormous significance for the workers in other countries.

The Five-Year Plan, which maps out our economic construction, is riveted to another and a concurrent Five-Year Plan designed to tear up the roots of religion. The vast army of exploiters and priests of all the religious creeds all over the world realise that the day when the earth will tremble beneath their feet is drawing near. That is why the rise of the mass Atheist movement imposes upon the Communist Parties the task of increasing the anti-religious struggle.

The Social Democrats organise Free Thinkers' Societies and Religious Societies simultaneously. The Communist Parties must penetrate into all anti-religious organisations in which the masses take part and must take control of this movement of the masses, *link it up* with the movement of the class struggle of the proletariat, and bend the tasks of the anti-religious to the tasks of this class movement.

The workers and peasants of our party occupy the key position also in this movement. It is imperative for us to increase the importance of this central position in anti-religious propaganda. We have certain institutions that can be of great assistance. For example, our anti-religious museum, the first of its kind, which, in spite of all its deficiencies, has attracted the attention of all those interested in the anti-religious movement. An anti-religious centre must be created to assist the Communist Parties of all countries to guide this constantly growing movement against religion and the clergy, because this

is a part of the class struggle and as such is not only inevitable, but an essential part of the struggle against the capitalist world, part of the struggle for Communism.

* * * *

THE " CRUSADE."

With the blessings of Pope Pius XI, the nauseous campaign of incitement against the Soviet Union continues, and is spreading from one capitalist country to another. Pulpits and professorial chairs, bourgeois and social-fascist newspapers, White Guard General Staffs and Stock Exchange committees, banks, press agencies and intelligence services, the haunts of the secret police, etc., etc., all keep belching forth endless fumes of lies and slander against the U.S.S.R. and giving full rein to their putrid imagination. It is difficult to say who has been the most proficient in spinning this fabric of lies : the Pope with his encyclicals, the White Guard General Staffs, or the publicity offices of the banks. All the forces of reaction have joined their voices in one blood-thirsty howl—and those who are directing this campaign will not hesitate, if it should serve their purpose, to drive matters to a bloody conflict.

The Pope, in his message, complained that the capitalist governments do not always support him unanimously, and that this has come about because of the lack of respect for " the laws of god, his kingdom and his justice."

This complaint is as hypocritical as is the " concern " for the U.S.S.R., expressed in his message. What touching " concern " ! We learn, for instance, that in the very first weeks of his reign, he offered up a short prayer supplementing a dispensation, beginning with the words : " Saviour of the World, Save Russia !" and that during the course of the last two months he has approved two forms of prayer in which the Russian people are entrusted to the kindly protection of that miracle worker of Lisieux, Saint Therese of the Infant Jesus. If we were not Atheists, we would pray : " Deliver us, O Lord, from such friends; from our enemies we can deliver ourselves."

In order to judge of the " friendly " feelings of the Pope, it is enough to quote the so-called " truth " about the Soviet

Union, which he broadcasts in his messages. Let the toilers in the U.S.S.R. know what this " truth " is. We are informed in this message that the " office employees, both men and women, are compelled to sign a formal declaration renouncing all religion, and to blaspheme God, under the threat of being deprived of their bread, clothing and lodgings. . . ." The Pope issues a call for a universal day of prayer to hasten the day when all his lambs may be gathered into the fold of the one and only saviour, and he enumerates a whole list of saints to whom he intends to pray for help in gathering the lambs into the fold.

We have no objection to the Pope's uniting with Kerensky and Miliukov, with Deterding and the social-fascists, with bishops who incite pogroms against Jews, like Bishop Eulogius, etc., but let him and them leave us in peace, otherwise the venture on which they are starting may not end to their liking. In any event, we, on our part, must do everything to lay bare even to the most backward of the toiling masses the real meaning of this campaign and to make plain who and what is behind this crusade, launched under cover of " defending god and the soul," to bring about another war more sanguinary than the last.

In fact, we need take but one look at this motley crew of defenders of religion to know what their guiding principle is. The shameless scribes of the mendacious Conservative bourgeois Press in England, like the *Morning Post* and the *Daily Mail*, vie with one another in daily inventing some new outrageous calumny against the Soviet Union. Even the organ of the Scottish labourites, the *Forward*, has been compelled to declare that " the defence of democratic freedom on the part of the *Morning Post* looks somewhat suspicious if one bears in mind its policy and its owners."

It is a strange " coincidence " that the raid on the Soviet Trade Mission in Munich took place at the time that Cardinal Faulhaber issued his appeal to all parties and religions, to rise against the Soviet Union, because, in his opinion, the two questions of paramount importance for the German people are : how to stem their falling birth-rate and how to safeguard themselves against Bolshevism. Cardinal Faulhaber does not realise, it seems, that the question of the declining birth-rate in Germany is directly connected with the question of the

increasing exploitation of the masses which he and other cardinals defend jointly with the capitalists.

All these enemies of the working class are united in their dread of Bolshevism, a fear they can no longer conceal. The *Berliner Börsen-Zeitung*, a newspaper representing the German heavy industry, has been forced to admit that it is not the question of religious persecution, but fear, pure and simple, that is actuating the capitalist world in face of the advance of socialism. This organ of the heavy industry and the great German trusts is afraid that the U.S.S.R. will soon become a model for other parts of the world. " To-morrow, Europe : the day after to-morrow, another part of the globe. If Europe allows these dreadful events to take their course, we shall learn to our sorrow that Europe as a political concept will no longer exist, because at this very moment the U.S.S.R. is shaking the very foundations upon which Europe is built. . . . That it will be the end of Europe and all that it stands for." What can be plainer than this?

The ground beneath the feet of these gentlemen must already be quaking, if they have to resort to such measures to create " public opinion " against the Soviet Union. It is no longer possible to hide the reasons for this crusade against us. Take any capitalist country or any colony, and you will see how the toiling masses experience in their own bodies the renowned " blessings " which these defenders of religion bestow upon them in the form of mass shootings, hard labour, the electric chair, etc. In Italy, whence the bigoted appeals of Pius XI are issued, the maledictions of the workers and peasants tortured by the fascists, shot and beaten by those in league with him, are quite audible. Why are Cardinal Faulhaber and the other princes of the church who defend capital and its right to rob and exploit the masses deaf to the groans of the workers who are shot down almost every week in the streets of Berlin and other German cities? Do they not see the growing class hatred of these masses against the defenders of religion? This is just the reason why the toiling masses in the capitalist world, under the pressure of the present unparalleled world crisis, are becoming more revolutionary and are drawing closer around the banner of communism. It is this that compels the Pope to come forward in defence of the money-bags.

The Russian White Guards are besieging the military staffs and intelligence services in all the capitalist countries, hoping for some little favours. Bishop Eulogius and Antonin Krapovitsky, and the Roumanian metropolitan Gury, notorious pogrom leaders and others, are up and stirring. We must see to it that the activities of these enemies of the Soviet Union become boomerangs in the hands of these vile calumniators. This will inevitably be so. In answer to the demonstrations of these reactionaries, fascists and White Guards—regardless of whom they pray to—the working class is calling counter-demonstrations and in all countries is closing its ranks in defence of the Soviet Union.

The workers in England, France, Germany and other countries, must be on the alert, otherwise the social-fascists will come to an agreement, behind their backs, with the worst enemies of the people; they will prepare an armed attack on the Soviet Union on the pretext of fighting for religious liberty, and at the same time prepare a still more savage attack on the living conditions of the working class and on their few remaining rights. Therefore, all those who are the friends of the land of the toilers, which is building up socialism, should mobilise their forces in opposition to this crusade, in their own class interests.

We do not want to treat the matter from a formal point of view; but as a matter of fact, this whole campaign, in which members of governments of capitalist States are taking part, and which is being carried on openly in the bourgeois Press, *is nothing but interference in the internal affairs of the Soviet Union.* The people who demand that we cease our " propaganda " are themselves engaged in open, vile, blood-thirsty propaganda against the U.S.S.R. and interfering in its internal affairs.

We do not want to confine ourselves to questions of form. We, Communists, know the value of this sham defence of the freedom of conscience. At the end of January, 1929, a bill introduced into the British Parliament, to abolish all punishment of those who preach heresy or blasphemy, in short, all those who do not subscribe to and also oppose the established religions, was decisively rejected. We could quote innumerable instances of persecution of religious beliefs, and countless cases of people of one faith being incited against people of another faith. Recently, there was a wholesale expulsion of Dukhobors

from their places of domicile in Canada; in Palestine the Arabs were incited against the Jews and the Jews against the Arabs; in India bloody clashes occurred as a result of the religious strife that is stirred up between Hindus and Mohammedans.

We could cite innumerable cases of persecution both with and without trial, in America, Germany, and other countries, for simply expressing some thought or other on religion that was displeasing to the ruling class. But these "crusaders" apparently do not realise the storm they are raising against themselves by their campaigns.

It is evident that people, who are by no means our allies, already realise this. The *Forward*, the organ of the Scottish labourites, which we have already quoted, has begun to understand what is really happening. In an article on January 21, 1930, entitled "The Church in Russia," the *Forward* prophesies that in the not distant future other countries will follow in the footsteps of the Soviet Union. The *Forward* offers this explanation :—

> "The revolution came and the church was deprived of those valuable rights in capital and land, and they were restored to the people. Where is the injustice? Who complains? Some bishops, some parish clergy, some Tory scribe, and some people constitutionally nervous regarding the sacredness of property. These are the dissentients, and they are mainly of the class who only support the church in their own country because they recognise in it an institution which they think helps to keep our present orders of society together . . . , we know that the State no longer subsidises any form of religion, and that the vast church lands and funds have been restored to the common people, to whom by right they belonged, and from whom they were stolen. We are so much in agreement with this part of their State policy that we hope it will one day be copied by our own Government for the good of our long-suffering poor."

The fact that this organ, which is an inveterate enemy of the Communist Party, speaks in such a tone to-day, indicates that the masses of the workers are watching with increasing sympathy the great work going on in the Soviet Union. The "Crusade" our enemies are launching can only hasten the inevitable process, as a result of which the majority of the

working class will understand the necessity of repeating the experience of the Russian toilers throughout the whole capitalist world. Only then will religious, racial and national strife come to an end. We, on our part, must do all in our power to speed up the process of freeing the masses from the influence of those who defend capitalist slavery under the guise of "defending religion."

* * * *

COMMUNISTS AND RELIGION.

Why must every Leninist know what is the correct Communist attitude towards religion?

Why is every class-conscious worker and peasant who wants to join the Communist Party confronted with the question of religion? What have the Communists got to do with God? Why are they concerned with religion? Does it make any difference to the prospects of the victory of Communism whether a Communist believes in a god or gods and goddesses, or in evil spirits, or not? Is it not possible to be a Communist and at the same time believe in religion, *i.e.*, believe that the whole world is controlled by a god, or a number of gods, and that everything on earth is done by the will of these gods or of their assistants—the saints, or the malice of evil spirits—devils, fiends, Satan? Is it possible to live without believing in God and yet preserve "morality"?

Millions of workers and peasants who have not yet entered on the road to communism ask themselves these questions, and thousands of workers who are sympathetic towards the Communist Party waver on the question of religion. Their belief in God, or in gods, their belief that without religion, without faith, without religious rites they will not know how to live aright, prevent them from joining the ranks of the Communist Party. The worker in the city can more easily free himself from religious beliefs than rural workers. It is easier for young people to abandon religious beliefs; their beliefs are not so firmly rooted. It is much more difficult for old folks to shake off these beliefs. And as a rule it is still more difficult for women to get away from religion than men.

Every Leninist, every Communist, every class-conscious worker and peasant must be able to explain why a Communist

cannot support religion; why Communists fight against religion; and every Communist must be able to answer the questions put to him by his fellow workers on this subject, he must know and understand why the Soviet Government has separated the church from the State, and the school from the church.

* * * *

PROGRAMME OF THE C.P.S.U. (ALL-UNION COMMUNIST PARTY—BOLSHEVIKS) ON THE QUESTION OF RELIGION.

What is a programme? The programme of a party is the full statement of the demands and views of the party on all phases of its activities. The party programme explains the struggle of the various classes in modern society, and how this society develops. Our programme contains our party's demands on all questions concerning social life.

On questions of religion we had to express ourselves with precision and clarity. What does our programme say on these questions? In paragraph 13 we read :—

> " With regard to religion, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union does not confine itself to the already decreed separation of church and state and of school and church, i.e., measures advocated in the programmes of bourgeois democracy, which the latter has nowhere consistently carried out to the end owing to the diverse and actual ties which bind capital with religious propaganda.
>
> " The Communist Party of the Soviet Union is guided by the conviction that only conscious and deliberate planning of all the social and economic activities of the masses will cause religious prejudices to die out. The Party strives for the complete dissolution of the ties between the exploiting classes and the organisations of religious propaganda, facilitates the real emancipation of the working masses from religious prejudices and organises the widest possible scientific educational and anti-religious propaganda. At the same time it is necessary to carefully avoid giving offence to the religious sentiments of believers, which only leads to

the strengthening of religious fanaticism." ("The Programme and Rules of the C.P.S.U.," p. 20-21. Obtainable at Workers' Bookshop, 16, King Street, London, W.C.2, England, and Workers' Library Publishers, 148, Stad, New York City, U.S.A.)

The programme of the Communist International also states clearly that Communists fight against religion, as it is a counter-revolutionary force, an ally and a weapon of the bourgeoisie in its struggle against the revolutionary movement.

We will try to state more simply what the programme of the C.P.S.U. says on the question of religion, and then we will explain it in detail.

On January 28, 1918, the Soviet Government issued a decree separating the church from the State, and the schools from the church. We will speak in detail about this decree later on. But our Party is not content with passing this law, for this law alone does not yet destroy the power of religion and of the church, it only weakens it. Laws separating the church from the State, and the schools from the church, have been passed not only by the Soviet Government but also by the governments in capitalist countries. But in these capitalist countries the bourgeoisie put these laws on their statute books only for the sake of appearances, to give in to the demands of the people, *while in reality they retain the connection between the church and the State, between religion and the State, and between religion and organised capital in the State.* In fact, in almost all the capitalist countries the church still enjoys enormous power and tremendous wealth; and to this very day, in most capitalist countries it still wields power in both the State and the school.

Take, for instance, Italy, where in 1929, the power of the Pope—the head of the Catholic Church—was re-established. In accordance with a treaty concluded with the leader of the fascists, Mussolini, the Pope was recognised as the head of the Vatican State, formed within the territory of the city of Rome. Of course, in return for this, the clergy give still greater support to the fascists. In Germany, and in many other states, the governments likewise invest the church with far-reaching rights. In the U.S.S.R., the law separating the church from the State, and the school from the church, has been actually carried out. But the law does not abolish religious organisa-

tions, nor does it prohibit religion. Our Party is convinced that *only when all social life, including economic life, proceeds according to a conscious, well-thought-out plan, will religion lose its authority over the peasantry and over the working class.*

This is why our Party is trying first of all to prevent the capitalists of all countries from using religious organisations to deceive the peasant and working masses, as they are doing now. We expose *the class basis of religion*, that is, we lay bare the class motives of those who are interested in upholding and spreading religious beliefs. Secondly, our Party conducts a struggle against religious prejudices and religious beliefs by propagating science and general education, through books, newspapers, lectures, moving pictures, etc., all directed against religion and religious deception.

As already stated, our programme expressly warns all Communists and Marxists that they must, in carrying out this work, act in a way that will give no avoidable offence to the sentiments of believers, because, by intentionally outraging the feelings of believers, they will only confirm them in their religious convictions.

* * * *

DECREES OF THE SOVIET GOVERNMENT ON THE SEPARATION OF THE CHURCH FROM THE STATE, AND OF THE SCHOOL FROM THE CHURCH.

On January 23, 1918, the Soviet Government issued a decree on the disestablishment of the church. This decree reads as follows :—

" *Decree of the Soviet of People's Commissars on the Separation of the Church from the State, and of the School from the Church, dated January* 28, 1918 :—

" (1) The church is hereby separated from the State.

" (2) It is unlawful to pass any local law or issue any decree whatsoever within the territory of the Republics, which will restrict or limit the liberty of conscience or grant any advantage or privilege whatsoever to any citizen on the basis of his religious profession.

" (3) Every citizen may profess any religion he desires or profess no religion; all laws disfranchising any

citizen by reason of his profession or non-profession of faith are hereby repealed.

" Note : No reference is to be made in any official document to the profession or non-profession of religion by any citizen.*

" (4) No proceedings of any State or other official public body shall be accompanied by any religious rites or ceremonies whatsoever.

" (5) The right to perform religious rites is hereby guaranteed in so far as no breach of the peace is committed and the performance does not infringe upon any of the rights of any citizen of the Soviet Republic.

" Local authorities have the right in such cases to take all the measures necessary to safeguard public order and security.

" (6) No person may refuse to fulfil any civic obligation on the ground of his religious convictions.

" Exceptions to this rule may be made on the condition that another civic obligation is performed in substitution for the one declined, but this must in each separate case be considered by the People's Court.

" (7) Religious vows, or oaths, are abolished. Whenever necessary solemn affirmation to tell the truth is made.

" (8) Registration of births, marriages, deaths, etc., are performed exclusively by the civil authorities and the departments for the registration of marriages and births.

" (9) The school is hereby separated from the church.

" The teaching of religious doctrines is not permitted in any State, public, or private educational institution where general educational subjects are taught.

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* Formerly, on registering birth, marriage, death, or applications to official institutions, the applicant had to state what faith he belonged to.—Ed.

" Citizens may give or receive religious instructions privately.

" (10) All ecclesiastical and religious societies are subject to the general conditions governing private societies and associations, and shall not receive any privilege or subsidy from any State, local, autonomous or self-governing body.

" (11) No compulsory collection of dues or assessments for the benefit of ecclesiastical or religious societies is permitted, nor may any measures of compulsion or punishment of fellow-members be taken by such societies.

" (12) No ecclesiastical or religious society, whatsoever, has the right to own private property, nor does any such society enjoy the rights of a judicial person.

" (13) All the property of the existing ecclesiastical and religious societies in Russia becomes the property of the people. The local or central State authorities, may, by special decree, place the buildings and objects specially intended for worship at the service of the given religious society free of charge."

Several years have now passed since this decree was passed, and everyone can judge for himself whether this was the correct step to take or not. Every citizen, this decree declares, may profess any religion he pleases, or no religion at all. Was this the case before?

Formerly, people suffered all kinds of punishments because they did not profess the particular religion the government wanted them to, but professed the religion which their degree of development, their lives and their consciences prompted them to. The Dubkhobors, for instance, were forcibly deprived of their children so that they would not be brought up in the Dubkhobor faith. In Siberia there were large numbers of people of various beliefs who had been exiled to the widest and most remote places, because they dissented from the official religion, and special monastery prisons were crowded with so-called " heretics," that is, people who did not believe at the bidding of the police in priests' cassocks.

The decree of the Soviet Government not only grants every person the right to choose any religion he pleases, but at the same time leaves him free to profess no religion at all,

whereas, formerly the Atheist was regarded as a pernicious, dangerous person, and was subjected to all kinds of persecution. His life was made a misery, for his conscience was violated. It is for this very reason that sections 2, 3 and 6 of the decree forbid religious discrimination among citizens. Formerly, things permissible to those of the orthodox faith were not permissible to dissenters, Jews, Mohammedans, or non-believers; now such privileges are abolished. This is why no official document, certificate, passport, or other document may bear any reference to the religion of the person concerned.

Section four of this decree forbids all religious ceremonies and rites of any description during the proceedings at any State or public functions, and this is why religious oaths and vows are also abolished. We do not demand that an oath be taken on the gospels, or on the cross or any other so-called " sacred " object. Whenever it is necessary to make a public declaration to tell the truth we accept a solemn affirmation which is based upon the class-consciousness of the person making the promise, as for example, the solemn affirmation of a Young Pioneer, or a Red Army soldier.

The decree on the separation of the church from the State, guarantees to all full liberty to perform their religious rites, but does not permit the acts of any religious organisations to disturb the public peace or encroach upon the rights of other citizens of the Soviet Union. For the sake of greater clarity upon this question, an amendment to the constitution was made in 1929, which is now the basic law of the R.S.F.S.R. This amendment states that all citizens are free to profess any religion (but have not the right to conduct religious propaganda) and have the right to conduct anti-religious propaganda. Religious liberty means that every citizen may profess any religion or religions. This is a matter for his own conscience to decide. That clause in the constitution means at the same time that the activities of religious associations are to be reduced to practising their various cults.

What was the position in regard to " liberty of conscience " prior to the revolution? Let us see :—

A religious procession is passing by. Whether one wanted to or not, one had to pull off one's cap. The same constraint was imposed in passing the Saviour's Gate of the Shrine of the Iberian Mother—which the Moscow workers pulled down in

1929, because it obstructed street traffic. Many a time when one did not take one's hat off fast enough, somebody would pull it off and assault one into the bargain, and there was nobody to complain to. This was considered the proper thing to do.

We do not now permit believers to behave towards other believers, or non-believers, in this fashion. But we still tolerate things that disturb the peace of other citizens. I, for instance, a non-believer, live near a church; I come home tired after a hard day's work and need rest. But my rest is disturbed and my nerves torn to shreds by the furious clanging of numerous church bells. The tolling of the bells disturbs the public peace and general quiet; even in a number of bourgeois States (Switzerland, for example), the ringing of church bells is regulated by law. There they would not tolerate the din created by the bells of Moscow's forty-times-forty churches. Here, we make a temporary concession to the prejudices of the believers because the great masses are not yet sufficiently enlightened to abolish this absurd and harmful custom which disturbs the much-needed rest of the workers. But already in numerous places in the Soviet Union the workers and peasants have demanded that the ringing of church bells cease and that the bells be taken down and used for the needs of industry.*

All religious organisations, according to the decree separating the church from the State, are placed on an equal footing as regards property rights: the State does not undertake any expense in regard to any church or religion. Section 10 of the decree says:—

> "Religious societies shall not receive any privileges or subsidies whatsoever from any State or local self-governing body."

This is the actual separation of the church from the State. Those who need the services of the priests must pay for them. The clergy cannot be maintained at the expense of the whole population, or at the expense of non-believers. Formerly, the State paid out tremendous sums—as much as 50 million gold roubles and more per annum, at the expense of the whole population, including the non-orthodox and non-believers, for

* In Moscow the ringing of church bells was prohibited by a city by-law passed in 1930.—Ed.

the support of churches and monasteries. It was a general tax for the benefit of stupefaction of the masses. Unfortunately, collections on behalf of churches still continue. Here and there the sums paid by the local population to the priests exceed the amount they pay in agricultural tax.

The law on the separation of the church from the State, however, foresaw that attempts would be made under the cloak of religion to evade certain civic duties. Take, for instance, the Baptists, the Evangelists, or the Adventists : in capitalist countries the adherents of these religious sects are not exempt from military service and raise no objection to it. The well-known English statesman, Lloyd George, for example, is a Baptist, but he was one of the principal leaders in the last imperialist war. The Russian Baptists call him their " brother in Christ."

In the U.S.S.R., however, a number of Baptists, Evangelists and Adventists declare that their religious convictions forbid them to take up military duties. Section 6 of the decree, however, states that no person may evade his civic duties on the grounds of religious scruples. Only in special cases, and then after the *decision of the People's Court, is it permissible to release a citizen from the discharge of any duty, the fulfilment of which he considers incompatible with his religious convictions.* But in such cases one civic duty must be replaced by another.

Such special cases are handled in the following manner : if the members of the religious organisation in question did not perform any military service under the Tsar, such as the Mennonites, for instance, then in each individual case, they may be exempted from military service, but they must perform some other duty instead. But those who served the Tsar, the landlords and the capitalists before the revolution, and now come and say to the workers' and peasants' government that religion interferes with their serving in the army—we say emphatically : No ! We say : *If you had no compunction about serving the Tsar, the landlords and capitalists, then you can serve the workers and peasants.*

Now as to the registration of births, deaths, marriages, and divorce. How was this done before the revolution ? Everything was in the hands of the priests, the rabbi or the mullah.

The priest registered the names in the church records and made out a birth certificate. Without this certificate it was impossible to go to school or obtain work, or even be buried. Religion required that some sort of rite had to be performed—christening, circumcision or some other such rite. This again meant more fees for the priest. When the time came for one to get married, one had again to go to the priest. Without a church service a marriage was not considered legal and any children resulting were deemed illegitimate. Illegitimate children were, moreover, treated like stray dogs—they had no rights. Marriage, again, meant more income for the priest. Even when one was dead, the priest charged for performing the funeral rites and for making out the death certificate.

The decree separating the church from the State changed all this. These formalities are now attended to exclusively by the civil authorities of the State. Births and deaths must, of course, be registered, in order that we may know the size of the population. And, of course, it is necessary to record every marriage and divorce because the civil status of a person determines the application of many laws to him—for instance : allotment of land, payment of taxes, military service, etc. It is important also to keep a record of deaths. The law only recognises civil marriages; if a couple want to go to the priest they are at perfect liberty to do so; the law does not prevent them. The dissolution of marriage is a matter for the civil court; the priest no longer decides whether one may divorce a wife or a husband.

Section 9 of the decree separating the church from the State says that schools are separated from the church. The teaching of religious doctrines is not permitted in any State, public or private educational institutions where general educational subjects are taught.

What was the position in regard to this before the revolution? We had parish schools which were in the hands of the priests. The priests, their wives and daughters, were in full control and taught or rather stultified the minds of our children. In other schools the children received religious instruction, that is, the little science which they were taught was diluted with a huge dose of religion as an antidote to the science.

Our decree says that the *schools are for teaching science and not for clogging the brains of children with religion.* The

school must not stand aloof in the struggle against religion: it must educate children in an anti-religious spirit, because it must not be forgotten that at present the home influences of the child are still religious. The school must counteract this harmful religious influence.

Finally, the decree declares all the property of the church and of religious organisations to be national property. What becomes of the churches and those who support them? According to the decree, they are handed over, by agreement, to the appropriate religious society for purposes of worship. The believers cannot dispose of this property as it belongs to the people, to the State.

If you study this whole decree carefully, section by section, you will see why it was necessary, you will realise its great significance; you will understand why this was one of the first decrees passed by the Soviet Government.

We shall see later on how this imperative step fits in with our programme as a whole. The Soviet power is a power born of the revolution, gained in the armed struggle of the workers and peasants, a power won from their age-long enemies. *The Soviet power was victorious in spite of the will of the clergy, who fought against it from the very beginning of the revolution.* Other States headed by kings or emperors speak of their holding power "by the grace of God," so as to maintain their position. The Soviet power is not in need of such deception. *The Soviet power is an expression of the will of the toilers who are building Socialism.* The church only hinders this work. It does not lead forward, but backward, or, as an old man once said of the clergy, "they only lead the way at funerals."

Religion can lead only in carrying the dead to the grave; religion does not, and cannot, lead the living masses of workers and peasants, in the struggle to build up a free social system.

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WHAT IS RELIGION?

There are many definitions of religion. Let us simply say that religion is a belief that, in addition to the visible world which man can observe, test and experience, there exists another

world—a supernatural world. The natural world—the earth, the sky, the air, mountains, rivers seas and other objects—can be measured, weighed, felt by the hand, and so on. But this imaginary supernatural world cannot be measured or weighed, nor can it be verified by any means within our experience.

The believer, the religious person, thinks that the ruler of this non-existent, supernatural world, whom he calls God, and sometimes Goddess, can determine the fate of people by his or her decrees. Believers think that life—the fate of human beings, their suffering or happiness—depends not so much upon man himself as upon God, upon this supernatural force. If God wills it, we will have a good harvest; there will be sunshine, rain or snow, if it so please God; or we will be visited by a scorching drought, by hail, storms, plagues, war or famine. In this way the believer feels dependent upon a power which he finds already in existence, to which he can only pray, and which *he himself is unable to subjugate.*

Take the Christians, for instance. What do they believe in? Their belief may be summed up as follows: There exists an omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent God, who has a divine Son, who, in turn, has a divine mother: then there is a Holy Spirit, also a God—there are countless saints, also like God—some more powerful, others less—each saint has special duties assigned to him. One is in charge of matters concerning the sea and cares for travellers; another is in charge of the weather and causes thunder and lightning, and sends down rain; a third takes care of the cattle; a fourth helps you if you have a tooth-ache; a fifth watches over bee-hives, and so on.

Moreover, most Christians believe that besides God there exist also devils and fiends, with their leader, Satan, who also possesses tremendous power. These forces of the nether world are so strong that, in fact, God and all the celestial forces have been struggling with them for thousands of years, but have not proved able to overcome them. These devils, fiends, demons, satans, or evils spirits, as they are also called, hold the personal lives of the Christians in their hands. According to the belief of the Christians they torment them with all kinds of sicknesses, spoil their businesses, instigate people to do evil, or to commit crimes; while God Himself and all the saints and hosts of angels in heaven cannot or will not do anything to stop the mischief committed by these demons and devils.

The majority of Christians believe that life here on earth is only the preparation for another life which will be an eternal paradise. Some picture this paradise as a sort of first-class almshouse. Others picture it as a luxurious brothel. The priests assure these Christians that as the overwhelming majority of people are sinners, and paradise will be reserved only for the few righteous ones who carry out the precepts of the priests, the majority of people will descend to a fiery hell, to the "depths of Hades," where the devils, created by God, will torture them and make them suffer every kind of torment. They will be roasted, sliced into pieces, beaten with hammers, burnt alive, etc., etc. Thus the priests of every cult have their own way of deluding the masses: the Jewish rabbi, the Roman Catholic priest, the Russian Orthodox priest, the Mohammedan mullah, the Evangelist, Baptist and other ministers of religion, each has his own way of fooling the people. With their silly tales they stupefy their brains as opium stupefies and poisons the unfortunate opium smoker. This is why the greatest thinkers and minds of our time cannot find words more apt for defining religion than those used by Karl Marx, who called religion "the opium of the people," or the words of Lenin who said that religion is a sort of alcohol which beclouds the minds of people, who stop seeing the world as it is, and see it as it appears to the befogged, stupefied, poisoned minds of a drunkard or opium smoker. Religious people see the world and its relationships between man and man and man and nature, not as they are, but as they are represented to be by the priests and their religion.

Is it possible to be a Communist and believe in such stuff? Is it possible to be a Leninist and believe in this mystical mummery?

If the world is controlled by God, if the fate of the people is in the hands of God, His saints, angels, devils, and fiends—then what sense is there in the organised struggle of the workers and peasants, in the creation of a Leninist Party? What sense is there in the Socialist reconstruction of society?

All this could be destroyed by a mere wave of the "Almighty" hand of God—who, happily, exists only in the imagination of believers—nowhere else!

The conception of the world from the religious viewpoint is incorrect; it is a mutilated understanding of the world and

of the mutual relationships of men. A person cannot act correctly, cannot act in an organised manner as a Communist, as a Leninist, if his brain is poisoned by religion. In order to overcome the tremendous difficulties which confront us; in order to remould the world as the working class and the peasantry want it to be; in order to subjugate all the forces of nature and compel them to work for the welfare of mankind; in order to change social relations from top to bottom; in order to eradicate war between nations, to exterminate poverty from the face of the earth—it is necessary *that every person, that every peasant and worker sees things as they are, without the intervention of gods*, saints, angels, fiends, goblins, were-wolves, and other spirits, good or evil.

Religion acts as a bandage over the eyes of man, preventing him from seeing the world as it is. It is our task to tear off this bandage and to teach the masses of workers and peasants to see things correctly, to understand what does exist and what does not, so as to be able to rebuild this world to fit the needs of the workers and peasants. We must, therefore, convince the masses that Communism and religion cannot go together, that it is not possible to be a Communist and at the same time believe in devils or gods, in heavenly creatures, in the Virgin Mary, in the saints, in pious princes and princesses, bishops, and landowners, who have been canonised by the priests.

It is impossible to be a Communist-Leninist and at the same time go to church, listen to the lies of the priests and take part in the performance of religious rites, that is, give support to the religious hocus-pocus that says that if you move your hands this way or that, cross yourself two or three times, bow, say this or that prayer, turn around to face one corner and then another, and think of the non-existent gods and saints, some changes will be brought about in the life of man. It is impossible to be a Communist, a Leninist, and retain the belief that the conditions of life, of society, of industry, the weather or an individual's health, can be influenced by prayers, by sprinkling " holy water," by burning incense, or by performing any other superstitious rites.

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IS RELIGION INNATE?

The priests would have us believe that religion was born simultaneously with the appearance of the first man on earth. *But science has proved that religion made its appearance in human society at a considerably later date.* If a person is brought up from the day of his birth in a way that precludes all contact with believers; if at the very outset he is taught a proper conception of the universe, and, when his mind is still in its plastic, its formative and most receptive state, all the phenomena of nature and society are correctly explained to him; and if he is so circumstanced that he will not be socially oppressed by the classes that utilise religion in order to strengthen their power, he will not need any kind of religion whatsoever. Religion appeared at a time when man, still completely in the grip of nature's elemental powers, could not explain to himself natural things, such things as change of weather, change of seasons, storms, thunder, floods, hail, war, pestilences, cholera, etc., etc. Primitive man ascribed all these to the intervention of some supernatural power. Religion appeared when man first tried to find the why and wherefore, a "reason" for such phenomena of life as death, dreams, epileptic fits, etc. Religion arose from the respect accorded to dead ancestors, to deceased parents and to the eldest of the clan; religion arose, on the one hand, from the abject dread in which our prehistoric forefathers stood of the ever-threatening, incomprehensible phenomena of nature, and on the other, from the social oppression he experienced. In capitalist, class society, religion has entrenched itself so firmly precisely because the toilers are socially oppressed, and in the majority of cases the exploiters utilise the helplessness of the masses to gain the upper hand over them in the name of God.*

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RELIGION SANCTIONS SLAVERY.

The ministers of religion were able to exploit the class ignorance of the masses, and upheld the erroneous ideas which

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* A number of comrades have pointed out to me that I have given different reasons for the origin of religion. That is true. But that was really how it was. The roots and the content of religion were different at different times.

religion taught concerning the structure of the world. They were interested in perpetuating the fear of the gods, and the devils, that haunted the people; in perpetuating their belief in saints, in angels and fiends. The ministers of religion, the priests, the clergy, were interested in seeing that the people believed in the divine origin of the authorities which maintained the clergy. These ministers of religion, priests and parsons were paid to teach that the world of the exploiters, of the oppressors —of the landlords and the capitalists— is a just world, a world in accordance with the laws of God. In any society that is divided into classes, where on one side of the line you have the oppressed and the exploited, and on the other side the oppressors and exploiters, religion and its ministers were and still are one of the bulwarks of the oppression of the masses.

You all know whom the church has been serving all along. When serfdom existed, the clergy persuaded the people that serfdom was the very best of conditions to be in, that is, for those who wished ultimately to enter paradise. They preached: "Slaves, obey your masters." "Christ came to earth not in order to abolish slavery, but in order to make the bad slave a good slave."

The State which upheld serfdom was hated by the people. Therefore, these tsars, lords and landowners had to devise some means whereby the peasants would become reconciled to the intolerable injustices of serfdom; they had to invent some justification for this oppressive, slavish drudgery. And here the clergy sprang to the assistance of the tsars, princes, the boyars, and the landlords, by thundering from their pulpits that serfdom was instituted at the express command and wish of God. The clergy shouldered the task of explaining to the peasantry the divine origin of this order of society. The wily priests summoned the aid of the church and religion, cited chapter and verse, and impressed upon the benighted peasants the great virtue of humility and meekness:

"Subject yourself to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him. . . . For so is the will of God. . . ." (*The First Epistle General of Peter*, Chapter II, verses 13-15.) "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God; and the powers

that be are ordained of God." (*The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans*, Chap. XIII, Verse 1.)

" ' The ruler ' . . . is a minister of God to thee for good." (*Ibid.* verse 4.)

" Render, therefore, to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour." (*Ibid.* verse 7.)

When the peasantry felt that the titled lords and the rich were making fools of them, the priests calmed their ruffled rustic hearts with the guiling words of the gospel: " *The rich man, too, is your brother, that is why you should love him. You must, therefore, not fight against him. The scriptures say: ' Be at peace with the world '.*" Ought the slave to strive for freedom? The priest taught him that the slave, the serf, ought to remain such for all time. " Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called. Art thou called being a servant? care not for it. . . ." *The first Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians* (Chap. VII, verse 20.)

If the peasantry thought of some way of overthrowing the rule of the princes, boyars, and landlords, the church said to them:

" It is not fit that the slaves rule the princes." Or, " For three things the earth is disquieted; and for four which it cannot bear: the servant when he reigneth . . . and a handmaid that is heir to her mistress." (*The Book of Proverbs*, by Solomon, Chap. XXX, Verses 21-23.) So serfdom continued its weary way, burdened with every conceivable penalty for infractions of its rigorous régime, groaning under the weight of the injustice of the system, while the clergy persuaded the people that this was the order of things as decreed by God:

" *Fodder, the stick, and the load for the ass: bread, punishment, and work—for the slave.*" *Make the slave work, and you will find peace; weaken your hand and he will seek for freedom.*" (*Ecclesiasticus;* or Jesus, the son of Sirach, Chap. 33, verses 24-26.)

The slave must fully obey the will of his master; if he does not obey, condign corporal punishment, according to Christian law, will be meted out to him.

" And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes." (*S. Luke*, Chap. XII, verse 47.)

But to the nobles, the princes, the landlords and boyars, religion gives counsel in the following words :—

" If he (the slave) be not obedient, put on more heavy fetters." (*Ecclesiasticus;* or Jesus, the son of Sirach, Chap. XXXIII, verse 28.)

It was even lawful to kill slaves. The laws governing slaves and serfs condemned a slave who killed a landowner, to death by torture, usually crucifixion or quartering, while a landowner who murdered a slave even for a trivial offence would get off scot-free. The clergy justify this perversion of justice with the saintly words :—

" Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire." (*S. Matthew*, Chap. VII, verse 19.)

And endless string of biblical texts could be quoted which the church has used to justify the enslavement of the people. Faithfully, indeed, did it serve the nobles, the landlords, and capitalists. It exerted the full weight of its power and authority to strengthen the autocracy of the Tsars :—

" Fear God," said the clergy, " honour the king." (*First Epistle of Peter*, Chapter II, verse 17.)

If we examine the texts of other sacred books we find that the Christian hierarchy is not the only one mouthing " revealed " commandments from on high to justify the power of the exploiters—the capitalists, landlords and priests.

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THE POWER OF THE CHURCH IN DIFFERENT COUNTRIES.

Do not make the mistake of thinking that only in Tsarist Russia did religion and the church possess such tremendous power. The most powerful religious organisation in the world is the Roman Catholic Church, with the Pope of Rome at its head. The Pope of Rome, in the first place, is the owner of vast wealth. Hundreds of thousands of clergymen, monks and nuns do his slightest bidding unquestioningly. He has at his disposal extensive holdings of real and personal property, whose value is estimated at tens of millions of pounds. He commands

special banks all over the world, which control hundreds of millions in gold; hundreds of newspapers and journals disseminate and propagate Catholic doctrines and views. The Catholics have even created special political parties, and trade unions, as in Germany, Austria, and elsewhere. These organisations are packed with obscurantists, men who are striving to drag us back to the most backward form of social existence, to serfdom; who want to see the power of the church become all-pervading; who yearn for monarchism. The Catholics possess tremendous power in Italy, France, Belgium, Spain, Germany, England and part of America, especially in Mexico and South America. The history of the Catholic Church is replete with deception and the mockery of the masses. It is a chronicle of unexampled villainy and of crimes perpetrated against the people. The infamous and dreaded Inquisition of the Middle Ages burnt at the stake, and tortured to death on the wheel and the rack, tens of thousands of independent spirits who dared to believe otherwise than in the way prescribed by the landowners and their henchmen, the priests. The scandals connected with the papal indulgences are notorious. The pope and his whole crew of cardinals and minor priests sold and still continue to sell absolution from punishment for sin. A man may commit any crime, but on the payment of a certain sum he can receive a pardon from the Pope, and not only for sins already committed; for cash you may have even your future sins redeemed in advance. Nothing more glaringly illustrates the banality of the clergy than this.

The Catholic Church, with the Pope in its van, is now an important bulwark of all counter-revolutionary organisations and forces. It is the good and faithful servant not only of the old capitalist landowing bourgeoisie, but also of the new bourgeosie—the industrial and financial barons of to-day. The Catholic Church aids and abets the fascists in their struggle against the revolutionary workers' movement, and it joins the chorus of all the other churches who are clamouring for war against the U.S.S.R.*

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* In 1930 the Pope of Rome, Pius XI, issued an encyclical declaring a holy crusade against the U.S.S.R. Religious organisations in all capitalist countries joined in this provocative attack, which was so brazen and crude that a part of the "liberal" clergy in the U.S.S.R. protested in the press against this hue and cry.

But the Catholic Church does not stand alone. Every other ecclesiastical organisation—Lutheran, Anglican, Jewish, Buddhist, Mohammendan and others, likewise helps the capitalists and landowners of its country to exploit and stupefy the masses, and keep them steeped in the delusion that the long-suffering of the people, their humiliation on earth, their starved and aching lives will receive an ample reward in heavenly bliss. All church organisations preach to the workers and peasants humility and patience, differing not a whit from the days of old in their attitude towards the capitalists, landowners, and other exploiters.

The clergy continue as hitherto to hoodwink the people, assuaging their rising rebelliousness with such quackery as :—

" Blessed are the poor in spirit, blessed are those who hunger and thirst."

The capitalists in all countries support all religions and all creeds; but they pay special attention to those religious organisations which have the greatest following among the masses, and those which are the better equipped and the more expert in the art of fooling the masses and holding them in subjection to the capitalists.

The lead in these religious organisations is increasingly taken by prominent capitalists like Henry Ford, billionaire owner of automobile and tractor plants; John D. Rockefeller, Jr., leading Wall Street financier, or that well-known politician, Lloyd George, a fervent Baptist, and leader in the world slaughter of 1914-1918. No Baptist would think of condemning Lloyd George for this. On the contrary, he is held in very great esteem by them, otherwise our Russian Baptists would not have called him, " Our brother in Christ."

What about the Jewish religion? It is of very great value to the Jewish capitalists, who, with the help of the rabbis, and the ancient " sacred " Hebrew tongue (which throws glamour over their innumerable mummeries) hold the people in bondage.

All the other religions perform similar services for their respective capitalist masters.

Although in many capitalist countries the church is nominally separated from the State, and the school from the church, the capitalists easily bridge the gap by maintaining relations between the organs of capital and the organs of religion

and the church. In this way they retain in their hands one of the most potent means of deceiving and stupefying the minds of the masses.

In post-war Europe the tie between the church and the bourgeois State is knit still more closely. The clergy possess enormous estates in all capitalist countries. The churches are tremendously rich and still exert enormous influence in the schools. During parliamentary elections, all religious denominations urge their followers to vote for the landowner, capitalist, or bourgeois lawyer, who best represents their interests. The priests hold particular sway over the minds of the women, through whom they influence their husbands. Women accept these priests as their advisers, and father-confessors, and transmit the instructions they receive to their husbands, sons and brothers.

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THE DOMINANT RELIGION.

The ruling class, in its effort to deceive the masses, often singles out the one religion which, under the conditions of a given country, is most likely to carry out its behests most implicitly and most successfully. Thus Pobedonostsev, the Procurator of the Tsarist Holy Synod, a fanatic, expresses his conception of State religion in the following words :—

" The State recognises one religion out of all the other religions, and supports and patronizes one church exclusively, giving it precedence over all the remaining churches and religious denominations."

In Tsarist Russia, the Greek Orthodox Church was the dominant church, which occupied an exceptionally privileged position. It was supreme, and enjoyed the support and the protection of the government. The Orthodox Church and its Holy Synod were given jurisdiction over all the other religious denominations. Those who did not comply with the laws of the Orthodox Church were liable to criminal prosecution. The dominant church made use of its prerogatives to build Prison Monasteries where all those who did not believe according to the ordinances of the Holy Synod were left to rot, driven insane or subjected to torture. There was a time when to cross oneself

with two fingers instead of three was a crime punishable with death, and many, indeed, were executed for this crime. Old Believers, Stundists, Dukhobors, Fundamentalists, Molokans, Skoptsi, and other sects were exiled to Siberia. They were beaten with cudgels, their nostrils were slit, they were branded and sent to deserted spots to perish. The Dukhobors had to flee from Russia to the U.S.A. and Canada* in order to escape from such persecution.

The clergy of the Orthodox Church sowed hatred for everything heterodox among the orthodox population. The Orthodox Church, instead of calling upon workers to unite, divided them against each other.

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THE CHURCH—HANDMAID OF THE BOURGEOIS STATE.

At one time, it is true, the clergy entertained hopes of carving out for themselves a much greater slice of the State power. That accounts for the struggle that went on for some time between the higher church dignitaries and patriarchs, and the Tsar. The temporal power won. The clergy then pocketed its pride and enlisted unreservedly in the service and the pay of the Tsarist power. The government set up a Holy Synod, consisting of bishops appointed by the Russian Emperor, and at the head of it placed an official who bore the ominous title of Procurator of the Holy Synod. Commencing with the reign of Peter the Great, the Tsar was considered the head of the church. The first article of the fundamental law of the Russian Empire reads in part as follows :—

"The Emperor of all the Russias is an autocratic and absolute monarch. His supreme power must be obeyed not only out of fear but with heart and soul, for this is the command of God himself." You see, therefore, that Nicholas Romanov did not simply happen to reign, but God himself had commanded him to do so, and God himself commanded "his" people to obey him.

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* Early in 1931 the Canadian government decreed their expulsion because of their cult of the nude, which offended the Puritan susceptibilities of the local religionists.—Ed.

Catherine II went a long step further when she defiantly declared to a bishop, "the will of his monarch must be higher than the law of the Gospels."

Thus the priests sank to the position of mere paid servants of the Tsarist government. They had to denounce to the Tsar and the government all those who agitated against their authority. The confessional was employed to pry into the innermost thoughts of the people. They preached to them humility and obedience to the worst enemies of the toilers, justified every act of baseness and villainy committed by the authorities, and declared that this predatory, parasitic order of things was ordained by the will of God. The priests received handsome remuneration and were awarded other marks of distinction. They were ambitious careerists, and in no way differed from the other cogs in the governmental apparatus. Their presence sanctified the execution of revolutionaries, and countenanced the shooting of disaffected soldiers, sailors, workers and peasants. In fact, they blessed these crimes in the name of God.

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THE CHURCHES AND MONASTERIES AS LANDLORDS.

In order to understand the reason why the church and religion were at the beck and call of the government in maintaining the landlord system, one must know what was the economic position of the churches and the monasteries in society.

In Russia, as well as in other countries, the churches and monastries were lavishly rewarded by the emperors, kings, princes and nobles for defending the institution of serfdom. In the course of time the monasteries and the clergy accumulated such an enormous amount of land that the landowners, envying them, more than once seriously considered confiscating these tempting morsels and dividing them among themselves. But the church was strong enough to resist every attempt to deprive them of their lands; it continued to prosper, and by the second half of the seventeenth century about a million serfs were attached to ecclesiastical lands. The church itself owned, sold and exchanged serfs, overburdened them with taxes, and accumulated fabulous wealth by cruelly exploiting them.

The wealthy monasteries were not a whit different from the great landlords; to which tens of thousands of serfs were tied.

The Troitsko-Sergievsky Monastery counted among its corporeal hereditaments 106,000 serfs; the Alexandro-Nevskaya Abbey 25,000 serfs; the Kirillo-Belozersky Monastery 21,590 serfs. Things got to such a pitch that the monasterial estates became even more extensive than those of great peers of the realm like Count Sheremetiev, Pazumovsky, and Stroganov. During the reign of Catherine II, serfs and lands were confiscated from the ecclesiastical institutions and the clergy. Under Catherine II and Paul I more than 50,000 serfs formerly belonging to the church were divided among the landowners, but the monasteries and the church were not shorn very close. The law thus put a slight damper on the expansionist proclivities of church and monasteries, but did not destroy their land holdings. In 1905, the various churches, especially the Greek Orthodox Church, owned 2,611,000 desyatines of land*, of which 1,871,858 desyatines belonged to the church, and 639,777 desyatines to the monasteries.

During the intervening years before the revolution the country estates of the churches and monasteries kept growing, while their urban real estate holdings similarly expanded. In 1903 the churches and monasteries of St. Petersburg owned 260 blocks of dwelling houses. The Alexandro-Nevskaya Abbey alone held title to 80 buildings and more than 40 grain and flour warehouses in the capital, in addition to eight thousand desyatines of ploughed land and four thousand desyatines in pastures located in the very outskirts of the city. In 1903 the Moscow parish churches owned 908 buildings and the monasteries 146 buildings. These monasteries owned, besides, 82 monastery inns and an enormous acreage of other land. Just what the capital of the churches amounted to is difficult to tell : they did not keep exact accounts; but in 1908 the Holy Synod alone had a balance of no less than 60 million gold rubles to its credit in the bank. The annual income of the Synod and the local dioceses was estimated at no less than 100 million rubles, apart from the generous offerings in kind on which each rural priest fattened and thrived. The following data testify to the luxurious life led by the priests up to the time when the revolution rudely shattered their elysium :—

* One desyatine equals 2.70 acres.

INCOME OF THE METROPOLITAN OF MOSCOW.

Salary	6,000	rubles.
Table allowances	4,000	,,
From episcopal buildings	8,000	,,
,, the Chudov monastery ...	6,000	,,
,, Troitsko-Sergievsky Abbey ...	12,000	,,
,, Iverskaya Shrine	45,000	,,
Total	81,000	rubles.

INCOME OF THE ARCHBISHOP OF NOVGOROD.

Salary	1,500	rubles.
Table allowance	4,000	,,
Episcopal buildings	2,000	,,
Novgorodsky monastery inns ...	300,000	,,
Total	307,500	rubles.

The Metropolitan of St. Petersburg received annually 259,000 rubles, the Metropolitan of Kiev, 84,000 rubles. No wonder the more thrifty clerics become affluent landowners. Thus in 1905, 570 men of the cloth possessed between 50 to 100 desyatines of land each (in all 47,992 desyatines), 590 clergymen possessed between 100 to 1,000 desyatines (by no means small landowners)—in all 145,292 desyatines—and 26 on the topmost rung owned 47,845 desyatines, averaging 1,840 desyatines each. These were really big landlords. Life in the monasteries was so notoriously dissipated and gluttonous that even the Holy Synod felt constrained in 1892 to issue an edict couched in the following terms :—

" Information has repeatedly come to the knowledge of the Holy Synod from our bishops, that fathers and mothers superior, to whom the custody of monasteries has been entrusted, keep monastery funds in their cells intermingled with their personal monies and expend these trust funds on the purchase of articles, the enjoyment of which is entirely out of keeping with clerical simplicity—such as the adornment of the cells of the superiors with expensive furniture, carpets, and paintings, sometimes in gaudy hues; keeping expensive horses and carriages, and arranging luxurious dinners, at which rare foreign wines are

served. There have even been cases of ikons and crucifixes being sold by fathers and mothers-superior for their personal gain. Our condemnation extends also to those superiors who, in disregard of the rules and regulations of their monastic order, permit relatives to remain for long periods within the monastery premises, with the intention of permitting them a quiet and comfortable retreat, especially in the summer time, to the great temptations of their brothers in Christ."

The Legacy of John of Kronstadt.

A single illustration will serve to make plain the life of dissipation and luxury lived by the Russian prelates. After the death of John of Kronstadt, a priest revered far and wide for his saintliness, a dispute arose over the division of his estate. The case was taken to court, and the court ordered an investigation which brought the following facts to the light of day :—

One of the secretaries of John of Kronstadt, while in the service of the " holy " father, had built himself a home in Kronstadt costing 900,000 rubles; kept several country houses at Streluga and Oranienbaum, and possessed a mass of precious stones and over 500,000 gold rubles in cash. Other members of John's entourage : a famous courtesan of Kronstadt, Matrene Ivanovna Kiseleva, who later founded the Joanite sect, in which she was known as Porfiria, mother of god; another well-known prostitude named Katka Belaya (Katerina Korgachova), a favourite of all the Kronstadt sailors, and a number of others, were all found to have acquired enormous wealth.

John of Kronstadt had a daily income of several thousand rubles, at times it was several tens of thousands. When inventory of his belongings was taken the following items shed a lurid light upon his saintliness : 260 bottles of the most expensive wines, none to be had for less than 10 rubles a bottle, and numerous other articles not quite in keeping with the life of a staid, respectable clergyman, but rather reminiscent of a keeper of a high class of brothels. His stock of linen might arouse the envy of any Broadway dandy; over 150 new shirts, first-class underwear, haberdashery, and other finery to match. The comb with which he, John of Kronstadt, arranged his well-greased hair was set in gold and studded with large-size jewels. But let the official court record speak for itself :—

" The little ante-room was crowded with articles of domestic use, scattered about in great disarray. In the wardrobe, hats, clothes and boots were piled up indiscriminately; the chests of drawers and the trunks were bursting with linen, top-boots, pots of jam, packets of tea, wine and other miscellanies. In the chest of drawers standing in the bedroom, in large trunks, and even heaped on the tables, there was a heterogeneous conglomeration of unrelated objects, such as jewelled crosses and church plate, dried mushrooms, sturgeon bones, etc., etc. Everything was thrown about pell-mell : an expensive cassock served as a wrapper for a bible, bundles of linen, more mushrooms, several boxes of pens and matches, another sacerdotal vestment hid some secular books, silver trays and vessels; several pairs of silk trousers lined with eiderdown, under which several kilos of dried sturgeon bones, more mushrooms; more gold crosses and also another bible; then more linen, articles of clothing, silver church plates, and so forth, ad infinitum.

" We began to examine the writing table, pulled out one drawer after another, emptied their contents out on a newspaper, and heard gold and silver coins jungling amidst a collection of Ural stones, matches, and rubbish of every description. Concealed under old letters and stationery were 13,162 rubles in bank notes, mostly in 50 and 100 ruble notes, also treasury notes and bonds."

So the ribald tales of the midnight orgies celebrated in the luxurious apartments of this prototype of Christian saintliness, all the gossip about loose women and the wine parties given there, were not just idle talk, but a true contemporary evaluation of the supposedly sacrosanct lives of all these " saints " and " princes " of the Church.

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REASONS FOR THE COUNTER-REVOLUTIONARY ROLE OF THE CLERGY BEFORE AND SINCE THE REVOLUTION.

If such was the position of the dominant church and its clergy, how could these propagators of superstition sympathise with the revolution? A moment's reflection will suffice to con-

vince anyone that the church and the clergy adhered to the old order of things.

Nor was this true of the Greek Orthodox Church alone. It may be conceded that while it was the dominant church, enjoying special privileges and emoluments, so that its position was considerably better than that of the other church organisations, still these other church organisations did not fare so badly. The Roman Catholic Church had also an excellent income, and possessed extensive properties, besides receiving gifts from capitalist Catholic organisations abroad. The Jewish synagogues were not granted any privileges whatsoever by the Russian State, but they were fully supported by the Jewish bourgeoisie. The Jewish rabbinate, like its sister priest-crafts, drew close to the side of the rich because the Jewish church had also incorporated in its *credo* the justification of the existence of exploiting classes in society. In Jewish synagogues the pews are so distributed that the rich worship at the eastern wall, the most honourable place (paying a high price for this " privilege ") while the indigent must say their prayers at the door, beyond which the beadle will not permit them to go. The revolution opened the eyes of the Jewish masses to this discrimination and mummery. They saw through the rôle played by the priesthood, the rabbis and the holy men (zaddicks), who were almost deified while alive; the revolution thus enabled the Jewish masses to hold a day of reckoning with the priesthood which had been befuddling them.

The Mohammedan clergy likewise worked hand in glove with the rich. They too amassed vast landed estates, the so-called " mosque lands " which were at the disposal of the mullahs; the incomes from these estates went to fill the coffers of the mosques. The mullah is thus as much the tool of the possessing classes as is the Russian priest and the Jewish rabbi.

It may occur to you to ask : and what of the Nonconformist sects? Were they interested in supporting the system of exploitation that existed before the revolution? Yes, and this affirmative reply may be explained as follows : Before the revolution many of the rank and file members of the Nonconformist sects sympathised with the revolution because they sought to escape from the oppression of the Holy Synod—from the oppression of the priests and the ruling church, from persecution, prison and exile. These sectarians sympathised with the revolution because the Tsarist government persecuted them on

account of their faith, on account of their dissidence from the Greek orthodox faith; but none the less this did not prevent the rich sectarians from exploiting the poor and supporting the political aspect of autocracy. The sectarians were disaffected because they were deprived of equal rights in regard to religious worship, and this rankling sense of injustice pushed them on to the side of the revolution; but the economic interests of these private owners (which the majority of these sectarians were) did not permit them to give more than qualified support to the proletarian revolution.

Could the clergy and those inhabiting the monasteries in the days of serfdom possibly be opposed to serfdom? Of course not. The whole of their income, their well-fed, idle, parasitical mode of life, depended on the unpaid labour of the serf, on the revenue they received from the performance of religious rites for the " benefit " of the benighted peasant masses stupefied by the opium of religion, it depended upon the rich gifts which the wealthy old merchants and landowners made to the various monasteries in order that they would be allowed in their old age to atone for their sins and to assure themselves a warm spot in the kingdom of heaven. When serfdom was finally abolished and the bourgeois land-owning system arose, who else became of prime importance to the clergy but the pious merchant? The merchants amassed wealth by sheer robbery of the masses, by fair means or by foul. Never a truer word was said than that " no one ever came by a palace by honest sweat alone." And after amassing wealth by this robbery, the merchant would part with a few hundred or a few thousand rubles to a church or a monastery in return for some special prayers. The well-to-do merchants had special choristers; special bass-voiced deacons intoned the prayers they paid for. Every peasant remembers how the village priest always singled out the rich with marks of respect while he snubbed the poor. All this explains why the clergy, far from greeting the revolution with rejoicing, regarded it as their enemy. And this is why, even now, when a counter-revolutionary organisation desires to worm its way into the masses, it uses religion or some church body as a screen. " The Union for the Liberation of the Ukraine," discovered in 1929, was such a counter-revolutionary organisation. The Ukrainian Autocephalous Greek Orthodox Church played a leading rôle in this anti-Soviet, counter-revolutionary organisation. Many of its leading church officials were White bandits, former

officers of Petlura's bands, and other White Guard military organisations, Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries.

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CHURCH AND RELIGION DURING THE KERENSKY REGIME.

The Provisional Government left intact the whole church system as it was up to the time of the revolution. A Church Assembly was held under the Kerensky régime. Those who attended included princes of the church, metropolitans, bishops, archimandrites; the greatest landowners in the country, like Olsufiev, Prince Trubetsky, Rodzyanko, and Samarin, also capitalists and bourgeois intellectuals. At this Assembly, held early in November, 1917, the patriarchal power was established with Vasily Belavin, the notorious Tikhon, at its head. This Church Assembly became a hotbed of counter-revolutionary activity. What kept the clergy in this constant state of alarm? The Church Assembly gave wide circulation to messages bristling with threats to call down the divine wrath of God and to invoke its power of excommunication, and—mark well!—demanded the immediate restoration of the lands, forests, and crops taken from the churches, monasteries, individual clergymen, and private owners. The church fathers bewailed the short memories of their parishioners in one of these messages, and asked plaintively: "Is it so long ago that the churches gradually became rich by the voluntary offerings of country estates, houses, and all kinds of gifts bestowed by rich and poor alike? Is it so long ago that the rural parishes at great sacrifice appointed 33 desyatines of their land as a donation for building churches?"

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THE CHURCH DURING THE CIVIL WAR.

One of the first decrees passed by the Soviet Government was the decree expropriating the lands of the churches, monasteries and landowners, and impowering the Volost Land Committee and the District Soviet of Peasant Deputies to dispose of them. This decree roused the clergy to indescribable fury.

This measure, as we can readily understand, destroyed the very foundation of the material prosperity of the church. The clergy realised that with the downfall of the capitalist system, their personal well-being, so inextricably bound up with that of the capitalist system, was also doomed.

This explains why the clergy joined the counter-revolution and committed numerous counter-revolutionary acts. This is why Patriarch Tikhon anathematised the Bolsheviks and the Soviet Power; this is why the priests organised " Jesus Regiments " and " Holy Virgin Regiments," which served under Kolchak and the Ataman Dutov and fought against the Soviet Power. When famine struck the land in 1921, and the Soviet Government, in order to save millions from starvation, decided to take the treasures of the people stored up in the churches and exchange them for corn, Patriarch Tikhon and many other princes of the Church fought this humane step tooth and nail. A considerable section of the clergy is still openly or covertly opposed to the Revolution. The Revolution deprived the Orthodox Church of its dominant position; but the revolution also reveals to the people the real rôle played by all religions, by all ecclesiastics. The revolution has given a tremendous impetus to the dissemination of scientific knowledge among the masses; the revolution has wrought unprecedented changes in the whole economic system of the country. This itself deprives religion and religious beliefs of their essential basis of existence.

* * * *

RELIGION, SCIENCE, FAITH AND KNOWLEDGE.

Certain priests gravely assure us that there is no contradiction between religion and science, that religion complements science, or rather science complements religion. There are scientists and professors who support the priests in this opinion. The priests eagerly parade the statements of these believing " scientists," and say : " There ! Even scientists and University professors accept religion; they, too, believe in God ! "

But the basis of all religion is belief in a God, *and nobody has ever succeeded in proving the existence of a God.* Of course, it is impossible to prove the existence of something that does not exist. If a child or even an adult demands proof of the

existence of God, he is told: "You must believe," that is, even if there is no proof you must believe. But *science does not take anything on trust, it puts everything to the test. Facts that science has established can be calculated, measured, weighed, analysed, and demonstrated. But that which is inspired by religion can neither be demonstrated, measured, weighed, nor verified.* The priests assure us that religion teaches us to understand the invisible, and the incomprehensible; in other words, religion claims to know that which man does not and cannot know because it does not even exist, that is to say, *religion exists where knowledge is lacking, religion is opposed to science.*

A host of examples could be given to illustrate this. Take, for instance, the naïve tale of the creation of the world in six days, and similar Bible stories, from Genesis to the Apocrypha. Religious instruction so implants this absurd conception of world-creation in our minds that it takes years to eradicate it. Science investigates and verifies its data, whereas religion blatantly proclaims: "*Blessed is not he who sees, but he who believes.*"*

It is not for nothing that the biblical narrative of how God forbade Adam to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil is told. *Belief* thus *forbids knowledge. Science enables man to know the causes of the various phenomena which occur in nature and, once man learns these causes, he learns also that phenomena in nature occur without the slightest intervention of any divine power.* Religion ascribes everything to the will of a non-existent God. And what suitable reply can we make to the learned theologians and scholarly professors who accept the existence of God as a fact?

* * * *

WHY MANY EDUCATED PEOPLE, INCLUDING PROFESSORS, ARE RELIGIOUS.

All *exploiters*, learned or otherwise, ostentatiously display their belief in God. They do so for the very simple reason that

* Carried in the Nonconformist hymn to the point: "Only believe and thou shalt see, That Christ is all in all to thee."

religion is very advantageous to them. That accounts for their hypocritical show of piety, even when they themselves are non-believers at heart. Take, for instance, the famous French philosopher, Voltaire, who, although he fought the Church, said : " *The common people need religion as a whip.*"†

A well-known " saint," revered by the Greek Orthodox Church, Gregory Nazianzen, a divine, in an unguarded moment, oblivious of indiscreet Bolsheviks who might thereafter publish the epistle against him, wrote the following to a fellow-theologian :

" Blessed Hieronymus : We must invent more fables in order to make a stronger impression on the crowd. The less they understand, the more enraptured they become. Our holy fathers and teachers did not always say what they thought, but what circumstances and necessity put into their mouths."

Bishop Sinesius wrote in the year 410 : " *The people positively demand that they be deceived, otherwise it will be impossible to handle them. As for me, I shall always be a philosopher only to myself; to the people—always a priest* " (*i.e.*, a deceiver). A certain pope, upon receiving a rich money offering, was overheard to remark to one of his intimate cardinals : " Look, brother, this fairy tale about Jesus Christ is a lucrative business."

Professors who declare that they believe in God are hypocrites, and base deceivers, who profess religion merely because it is to the advantage of the exploiters, because the common run of the scholars and scientists in bourgeois countries are bound by a thousand ties to the exploiters; ties social and financial, hence also political and moral; in short, the bourgeoisie butters their bread. If any of them truly and sincerely believe in God, they are not really men of science, but high priests of superstition masquerading in professorial gowns, although many may even be renowned as the authors of valuable scientific works. They do not have the courage of their scientific convictions, and hence do not bring their deductions to their logical conclusions, else they would admit that science and religion are incompatible.

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† In Britain and U.S.A. we have our " religious " professors, but the point is put bluntly by Julian Huxley in " What Dare I Think? " when he says that a religious organisation is necessary for the masses even if no god is worshipped!

A glaring illustration of the irreconcilability of science and religion was provided by the so-called " Monkey Trial," in the State of Tennessee, U.S.A., at which the American bourgeoisie tried and convicted a school teacher for repudiating the Bible, and teaching the Darwinian theory of the origin of man.

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RELIGION KEEPS ASUNDER PEOPLE OF THE SAME CLASS BUT OF DIFFERENT FAITHS.

Religion keeps asunder people of the same class—but of different faiths—instead of uniting them. Herein lies its harmfulness.

The depraved monks in monasteries like the Pochaevskaya Abbey, printed leaflets calling for pogroms and massacres of Jews and others " of alien stock," meaning those professing faiths other than the Greek Orthodox. The priests themselves took part in the pogroms, and gave their support, to pogrom-inciting organisations like, " The League of the Archangel Michael," and " The League of the Russian People." In foreign countries the clergy support the fascists, while in the U.S.S.R. they back the gulaks and the Nepmen. Formerly, the priests exercised tremendous influence in all State affairs. Some of them, like Gregory Rasputin, not only had the Tsarina completely under his influence, but often had the whole government at his beck and call. The priests thundered anathemas at anyone who incurred the displeasure of the government. Thus, Count Tolstoy was excommunicated by the church because he explained the gospel as he understood it, that is, he had his own way of befuddling the people, which differed from the way in which the orthodox church wanted the people to be befuddled.

Whenever war broke out the government called the clergy to its aid. We saw how in the world war the clergy in all the belligerent countries justified that holocaust in the eyes of the people, blessed the battle flags, and prayed that victory be granted to their side. The priests visited the regiments with crosses held aloft, aroused their religious fanaticism and spurred the masses of soldiers to be massacred " in defence of their faith," although nobody had made any attempt to attack

religion. During the war the priests conveniently forgot the command: "Thou shalt not kill." Instead, they fervently appealed to the "lord of hosts," the "god of vengeance," "Avenging angel," and other stereotyped phrases from the universal store-house called the Bible. They prayed that all the enemies of the king might be "humbled beneath his feet," or that God would grant victory to the king over his adversaries, each according to the camp they were in.

And when the oppressed millions, dispossessed and disfranchised, were driven to despair and arose *en masse*, the church and the clergy sided with the government, and justified all its repressive measures, all the bloodshed by it in putting down the uprising. We all know what happened on January 9, 1905, when the working class, driven to despair, went to petition the Tsar, flying religious banners and carrying ikons and portraits of the Tsar at the head of the procession, while they chanted: "Lord, save Thy people." All this degrading display of humility to ask for an extra crust of bread, for some slight alleviation of their miserable, cheerless lives. What was the response of the priests to the cold-blooded shooting of several thousands of working men and women? Shortly after that memorable day, the Holy Synod sent a message to all its minions and ordered them to read it from all the pulpits in the land. Its substance read as follows:—

"Russians, incited by malicious and evil-minded persons, native and foreign enemies of the fatherland, threw aside their peaceful occupations by the tens of thousands. The past disorders were caused by traitors, bribed by the enemies of Russia, and by the enemies of public peace and order. Considerable sums of money were sent to them to foment internecine strife."

The priests claimed that the workers had been bribed with 18 million rubles from Japanese and British funds. In the town of Tomsk, the Black Hundreds locked up and then set fire to a theatre where citizens had gathered to discuss public questions, and several hundred people perished in the flames. The people rushed to the Bishop of Tomsk to beseech him to use the authority of his high office to curb the Black Hundreds, but this holy man did not stir a finger. In Saratov, a petition was presented to the local Bishop to stay the excesses of the pogromists, but that worthy dignitary merely prescribed the

usual Christian panacea, prayer. That is what the Russian clergy were like before the Revolution.

The church and the clergy were instruments of oppression in times of serfdom, and afterwards, when the capitalist land-owning system came into being, they found chapter and verse to support that system. They always exerted all their influence over the masses to uphold the exploiting class; they pursued the policy of tearing asunder people of different faiths, but belonging to the same social class, and of inciting one group of believers against another group, fighting every liberation movement, every movement for freedom and revolution. The church was a part of the State mechanism, part of the State organisation. This made it imperative that one of the first steps of the Soviet Government after it assumed power was to decree the separation of the church from the State.

It may occur to you to ask: "Why was the church not separated from the State after the February revolution?"

The answer to this very pertinent question must be sought in the fact that the political power was then still in the hands of the capitalists and the landlords. Lvov was appointed Procurator for the Holy Synod. The Provisional Government, although it comprised Social Revolutionaries and Mensheviks, was not a government created by the will of the toiling masses. This Provisional Government, a tool of the bourgeoisie, still needed the church to help keep the masses "in their place," to justify the unjust class oppression still prevailing, to justify the predatory land-grabbing Imperialist War. This explains why these self-same hypocritical Mensheviks and Social-Revolutionaries, in whose party programmes before the Revolution the demand for the separation of the church and State loomed so big, forgot these solemn pledges the day after the February Revolution and did not stir a finger to diminish the power of the church and the clergy. Only when the Soviets came into power, only when the workers and peasants seized the helm of State, was the church deprived of its power as a State church and as an instrument of oppression.

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THE COMMUNIST ATTITUDE TOWARDS NONCONFORMIST SECTS.

The word Nonconformist means much the same as dissenter. All those believers, who were not in total agreement with the

dominant State religion and church organisations, and who split off into separate groups of believers, were called sectarians.* Thus the Lutherans, for example, were at one time called sectarians. In Russia all those believers who did not belong to any one of the major and powerful religious organisations, such as the Greek Orthodox Church, the Roman Catholic, the Lutheran, the Anglican, the Mohammedan, Jewish or Buddhist, were called sectarians; the list of sectarians included the Stundists, the Baptists, the Mennonites, the Evangelists, the Adventists, Old Believers or Old Ritualists, Dukhobors, and many others. They are still called sectarians, although there is no established State church.

Communists look upon all religious organisations, including all sectarian organisations, as organisations which harbour opponents of the proletarian dictatorship, and of Socialist construction.

All religious organisations, including all sectarian organisations, oppose the correct conception of the world, based upon science, upon verification, upon knowledge, and cling to their incorrect ideas, which are based on faith alone, because all religions take it for granted that there exists a supernatural being which governs all animate and inanimate nature and controls the destinies of man. As to differences between one religion and another, they are of little, if any, consequence. Lenin, writing to Gorky, sees no greater difference between the one and the other than between a blue devil and a green one.

But, of course, we must examine very carefully what these sectarian organisations do. We must strenuously fight them, if under the pretence of preaching religious doctrines, they advocate struggle against the Soviet power and refuse to fulfil various civic duties. Take, for instance, the Baptists, the Evangelists, and many others. Under the Tsar they served in the army, repressed the workers and peasants and defended the land-owners and capitalists. They served the Tsar and the capitalists loyally and truly. But now, under the Soviet Government, when it is necessary to defend the cause of the workers and peasants, they, alleging religious scruples, declare they are unable to bear arms. This is not a question of religion,

* In Russia, the Nonconformist sects are called sektanti—or sectarians.—Ed.

but a question of politics, and counter-revolutionary politics at that!

Take the cases of refusal to pay taxes and to fulfil other duties of citizenship. This is politics—pernicious politics directed against the interests of the working class and peasantry, because these people want to throw the whole burden of State construction on to the shoulders of others, while they themselves refuse to do their share in building up the new society.

Other sectarians forbid their children to join the Young Pioneers, the Young Communist League or the Communist Party; they forbid them to attend schools or to go to the village reading rooms to listen to Soviet lectures. Such a policy cannot be condemned in terms too strong, as its aim is to keep the younger generation in ignorance and mental darkness, under the thumb of religious and counter-revolutionary people. It would prevent the younger generation from mingling with the workers and peasants, without which a free Soviet State is an impossibility. Here and there in the Soviet Union, during the last few years, sectarians have joined the major religious denominations in spreading propaganda against the most important campaigns organised by the Soviet government; they agitated against the collectivisation of agriculture, against subscribing to State loans, against grain collections for delivery to the State, against the introduction of the continuous working week in industry, etc., etc. We must fight against these wrecking elements.

We must expose the links that exist between these religious sects and the organisations of the rich kulaks in Russia and the foreign banks and capitalists who help them; we must demonstrate how these organisations serve the capitalists. We must not be deceived by the philanthropic work that these religious bodies sometimes engage in. In this they merely serve as the tools of the exploiters, kulaks, traders, former merchants, and factory owners, to attract the poor to their side and follow the same tactics that they employ in all capitalist countries, where they maintain shelters, night lodging houses and similar traps to catch the "souls" (read: *minds*) of the unwary proletarians.

On the other hand, we must not be hostile towards the working men and women who belong to these religious sects. We are not hostile to workers who are Greek Orthodox, Roman

Catholics, Mohammedans, or Jews. This campaign against religion must not be carried out by resorting to coercion, force, administrative orders, or by forbidding church services, but must be a persistent, steady crusade of enlightenment, especially among the youth.

We must, year in year out, reveal to them the exploiters' rôle played by the sectarian organisations, exposing the very tangible relationship that exists between every religious body, including the sectarians, and various capitalist organisations.

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HOW TO CARRY ON ANTI-RELIGIOUS PROPAGANDA.

Fifteen years ago the then relatively small Bolshevik Party, under Lenin's leadership, led the vast masses of workers, peasants and soldiers in their vigorous resistance to the landlords, the bourgeoisie, the tsarist generals, Kerensky's Provisional Government—against the whole of the old social order. The enemy realized that if the proletarian dictatorship emerged victorious, it would leave no stone of the old order unturned. It would break up the bourgeois state-machine with all its super-structures. All those who supported the system of exploitation in the old Russia, which system had been somewhat renovated and slightly reformed during the period between February and October, 1917, sensed a deadly enemy in the proletarian dictatorship. All the forces of the old order rallied against the proletarian power—against the proletarian revolution—seeking the support, first of German imperialism, and then of the Allied imperialisms. The Russian counter-revolution strove for several years to break the proletarian dictatorship; but it failed, despite the fact that all the forces at the command of the imperialists were mobilized in its aid.

By no means the least important rôle in this struggle against the proletarian dictatorship, against the socialist revolution, was played by religion and the Church. The age-long experience of the Church in deceiving the masses, and the age-long influence of religion over the masses of the toilers were utilized by the counter-revolution to the full.

The revolution affected the vital interests of all the exploiters. The convocation of the Church at which the

Patriarch Tikhon sat side by side with Count Olsufiev-Davidov, Prince Ukhtomsky and a number of other counts and princes (some of them the biggest landlords in the country) anathematized the Bolshevik Soviets and called for a crusade against them. The monks in the Troietsko-Sergeyevskaya Monastery and in hundreds of other big monasteries and reactionary ecclesiastical centres began to stir with alarm like spiders at the approach of danger in the very first days of the proletarian revolution. While the toiling masses threw off their chains by means of this struggle, tens of thousands of parasitic monks and priests lost their very life-basis in the breakdown of the landlord-capitalist system. They had to find speedily a new social basis. They consolidated their influence over the kulak, or rich, capitalist sections of the peasantry upon whom in the past they had only partly relied. In practically every village the warden of the Church was the local kulak. They took a most active part in the counter-revolution, in the armed struggle against the Soviet Government. They welcomed the interventionists, and solemnly blessed the Whiteguard generals.

But nothing saved them. They themselves least of all trusted in the power of their prayers to heaven and in the force of their decrees of damnation. If these age-old swindlers had any hope at all it was in the power of the foreign general's sword. When the general's sword was broken, a section of the clergy tried to adapt themselves to the profound social change that had taken place among the masses of the toilers—to the profound political changes then taking place in the entire life and consciousness of the peasant masses. Hence, all the various " renovationist " tendencies both in the Orthodox Church and among the other religious organizations. Hence, the outwardly radical decisions of some of the Congresses of the Sects which also served, in a certain measure, to disguise the counter-revolutionary essence of these religious organizations under devices to preserve themselves in the hope of " better times,"

Through all the fifteen years since 1917 it is possible to trace the rise of the various new religious groups and organizations (Lauders of the Name, Theodorites, the Autocephalian Church in the Ukraine, etc.), all of which served the counter-revolution. Whiteguard generals and colonels, former Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries, these were the inspirers and leaders of these organizations in the country. International imperialism in every capitalist country stood behind them.

The fifteen years of proletarian dictatorship have brought about a most profound change in all the social relations of the 180 millions of the population of the U.S.S.R. Not even a trace has been left of the landlord and capitalist classes. The revolution is now grappling with the task of eliminating the kulaks as a class; and it has already achieved great results therein. About two-thirds of the peasant households have adopted the system of collective farming, and four-fifths of the cultivated area of the country is now farmed by collective farms. The working-class, which led the revolution and is guiding the work of socialist construction, has grown strong and has demonstrated that it is not only capable of capturing power, but also of maintaining and using it for the purpose of building a socialist society. Stone upon stone, under the incredibly difficult conditions created by a capitalist environment, by cultural backwardness and by material privation, the working-class has laid a foundation for the socialist system, for socialist society. It has fulfilled the first Five-Year Plan of socialist reconstruction of the country. It has been able, on this basis, boldly to take up the task of creating a classless society. It has placed its socialised industry upon a new technical basis and is placing socialist collective farming upon a similar base.

It is difficult to enumerate all the gains of these fifteen years which have left an indelible mark upon every social relationship—upon the political development, upon the cultural level, upon the whole life of the millions of workers, peasants and toilers of the U.S.S.R. Under the conditions of proletarian dictatorship our multi-national state is developing in an entirely new direction. Peoples who were moribund in the past have now taken the road of speedy cultural development and growth. This culture is national in form, but socialist in content. This culture is non-religious. Moreover, it is increasingly becoming an anti-religious, atheistic culture.

The more the method of planning penetrates every pore of our economy, the more profoundly the economic structure of the U.S.S.R. is changed, the broader becomes the basis of atheist influence, and the deeper is the ground ploughed up for that consistently materialistic outlook which constitutes the basis of atheism. On this basis, on the basis of proletarian culture—and of its assimilation by the greatest masses of the toilers—the League of Militant Atheists grows and develops.

In summing up the results of the first four years of the October Revolution, Lenin wrote on October 14, 1921 :—

> " What were the main manifestations, relics, and remnants of serfdom in Russia in 1917? The monarchy; the feudal division of society into orders; land ownership and land tenure; the condition of women; religion; national oppression. Take any of these ' Augean stables '—which, it may be said in passing, were left very much uncleaned in all the advanced states when they made their bourgeois democratic revolutions 125-250 years ago and even earlier (in 1649 in England)—take any of these Augean stables and you will see that we cleaned them completely in a matter of some ten weeks or so, from October 25 (Nov. 7), 1917, to the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly (Jan. 5, 1918). In this field we did a thousand times more than the bourgeois democrats and liberals (the Constitutional Democrats) and the petty-bourgeois democrats (the Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries) did in the eight months they were in power."—[Lenin, *Vol. XXVII*, p. 25, Russian edition.]

And, enumerating the different manifestations, relics and remnants of old Russia which were destroyed by the proletarian revolution, Lenin pointed out that the leaders of the bourgeois-democratic revolution had all promised in their time to accomplish all this, but all had failed to carry out their promises :—

> " One hundred and fifty or two hundred and fifty years ago the advanced leaders of this revolution (or ' these revolutions ' if we are to distinguish each national species of one common type) promised their nations that they would liberate humanity from mediæval privilege, from female inequality, from the state prerogatives of this or that religion (or of the idea of religion), from ' religiousness ' in general, and from inequality between nationalities. They promised, but they failed to fulfil their promises."—[Lenin, *Vol. XXVII*, p. 26, Russian edition.]

We are not referring here merely to the quantitative results of the anti-religious propaganda, even though they too are of much importance. The great French Revolution gave rise to a mass anti-clerical movement, but the Catholic Church very soon succeeded in recovering from the blows inflicted upon it. The Jesuit congregations still exercise, even if semi-legally, an enormous influence over the schools in France; and actually

receive enormous assistance from the State. The bourgeoisie which at one time dealt ruthlessly with the Church in France, later took it into its service, and the Church serves the Paris Stock Exchange with its Mass as zealously as it served the " Sun-king " Louis XIV—as it served the French nobility, as it served and still serves every system of exploitation in every country in the world. For the first time in the history of humanity a vast state, the U.S.S.R., took the path of unconditional, complete and consistent rupture with the Church and religion. That is why not a trace of the influence of the Church over the schools has been left. That is why atheism in the U.S.S.R. grows throughout the length and breadth of the country. That is why not only the working-class in the cities, but many millions among the peasantry, are resolutely breaking with all religion. That is why anti-religious education of the youth and children is possible in this country.

Of course, it is possible and necessary to contrast the two basic factors of modern political life in every field. These are : the tremendous growth of the U.S.S.R. on the one hand; and the profound crisis of the whole capitalist world on the other. There can be no doubt that the fact that the new state of the U.S.S.R. is led by the Communist Party, with a program permeated by the spirit of militant atheism, gives the reason why this state is successfully surmounting the great difficulties that stand in its way—that neither " heavenly powers " nor the exhortations of all the priests in all the world can prevent its attaining the aims it has set itself. This fact affects the minds of the great masses in a revolutionizing manner. The influence of this fact is all the greater for the reason that it is accompanied by the decay and collapse of the capitalist system throughout the world, notwithstanding the prayers the priests are directing to heaven to save the capitalist world from destruction. In his latest message even Pope Pius XI was forced to admit that a situation like the present has never existed since the flood :—

> " If we pass in review," he writes in his message to his " Venerable Brethren," " the long and sorrowful sequence of wars that, as a sad heritage of sin, mark the stages of fallen man's earthly pilgrimage from the Flood on, it would be hard to find spiritual and material distress so deep, so universal, as that which we are now experiencing; even the greatest scourges that left indelible traces

in the lives and memories of peoples struck only one nation at a time.

> " Now, on the contrary, the whole of humanity is held bound by the financial and economic crisis so far that the more it struggles the harder appears the task of loosening its bonds : there is no people, there is no state, no society or family, which in one way or another, directly or indirectly, to a greater or less extent, does not feel the repercussion."

In the face of this crisis, all the manœuvres, all the measures the capitalist world can take, all its efforts are powerless and can avail them nothing.

. . . . . .

The sixteenth year of the proletarian dictatorship commences with the development of the second Five-Year Plan of socialist construction. This new Five-Year Plan will be fulfilled no matter what difficulties it may entail. It will cause even deeper changes in every social relation, it will bring us close to classless socialist society. It will destroy more thoroughly the remnants of religious views among the masses. It will eradicate the last remnants of capitalism in economic life and in the minds of men. If at the present time a minority in the Union adheres to the atheist outlook, during the second Five-Year Plan it will be possible and necessary to bring about an even more profound change in this respect, for it is difficult to speak of eradicating the remnants of capitalism from the minds of men if we still leave room for religious ideas which delude the mind—for authoritarian ideas, ideas about " transcendental " and " supernatural " forces. In this period religion must die out of the minds of the millions much more quickly and thoroughly. This definite growth of atheism about which Pope Pius XI complains so bitterly in the message quoted above, and which he says is " the most dreadful evil of our time," is inevitable not only in the U.S.S.R., but in every other country as well. Pius XI complains that—

> " Thus we see to-day what was never before seen in history, the satanical banners of war against God and religion brazenly unfurled to the winds in the midst of every people and in all parts of the earth."

In the capitalist countries this process will become sharper and broader, the more so as the class battles which are inevitable under the conditions of the growing class oppression, of the Fascist-isation of the State power and preparation for new imperialist wars, primarily against the U.S.S.R., the fatherland of the toilers of the whole world, will become extensive.

We must study the situation in which the atheist movement is developing in the U.S.S.R. and in the capitalist countries.

The further growth of socialism in the town and country in the U.S.S.R. will inevitably lead to the dying out of religion. But it would be a great mistake to believe that religion will die out of itself. We have repeatedly emphasized Lenin's opinion that the Communist Party cannot depend upon the spontaneous development of anti-religious ideas—that these ideas are moulded by organized action. Every notion of leaving the growth of an anti-religious, atheistic outlook among the masses to spontaneous development is therefore opportunistic.

This opportunist dependence upon spontaneity usually goes hand in hand with the conception that further development will proceed in the form of a " smooth " ascent to the complete victory of socialism. Every one of us knows what difficulties have to be overcome on the road to victory. We achieve victories every day, but we achieve them after overcoming the greatest obstacles and by fighting against those forces of the old world which interfere with our progress. But this period of struggle is inevitable. Hence the class struggle which assumes most varied forms, which at certain points, at certain moments, becomes very acute, is also inevitable. The influence of the kulaks over the most varied sections of peasant life, the influence of kulak sentiments among various groups of workers who have contacts with the country, remains a fact. That is why the revival of religious sentiments among certain groups and at certain moments is still possible.

What are the tasks and duties of the League of Militant Atheists during this period?

Primarily, to conduct serious work among the masses, because the demands of these masses, even of the most backward groups among whom the influence of religion is still

strong, have become more serious. In our work among religious people we must bear in mind Lenin's advice to utilize every method available to us, or, as he said, we must " approach them this way and that way " in order to stimulate them to criticize religion themselves. This work has not yet been properly developed. We must also work out the proper methods and produce the necessary mass literature which will meet the requirements of these backward groups and of religious people.

We must observe that the past fifteen years of struggle for consistently Leninist militant atheism have been years of struggle against every attempt to restrict the tasks of the struggle in an opportunist manner, or to give the struggle an anarchist-rebel turn. We have fought against the substitution of " pure " education, mere anti-clericalism, priestophobia, for militant atheism. But at the same time we have also combated the tendency to draw a distinction between our educational work and the exposure of the class rôle of religion. We have linked up every step in our educational work among the masses with the task of exposing the social roots of religion. We have fought against the opportunist attempts to liquidate anti-religious work on the pretext that religion is dying in the U.S.S.R. anyway. But we have also fought resolutely against the theory that religion can be wiped out in no time—that all that is required is to use strong language. This struggle on two fronts was one of the necessary conditions of the victory which we have gained on the anti-religious front.

This victory would have been impossible without an intense ideological struggle in the field of philosophy. For this reason the League of Militant Atheists has been closely connected with the Society of Militant Dialectical Materialists and they together have fought both against the Mechanists and against Menshevik idealism. I may remind you that the magazine, the *Atheist* (Bezboshnik), was the first to start the struggle against the philosophical mistakes of Deborin's school. The defect of this struggle at first was that we did not criticize the Mechanists with sufficient sharpness; but this defect was subsequently rectified. The struggle against the Mechanists and the influence of Menshevik idealism in the field of anti-religious propaganda, continues to be one of our most important tasks. While we do not refuse to co-operate with the inconsistent Materialists in the anti-religious struggle, we must, however, expose their

mistakes; we must sharply define our own viewpoint, sharply criticize every inconsistency on this sector of the ideological front.

We have continued and must continue to criticize very strongly those who under-estimate the importance of atheist propaganda; for this underestimation was one of the results of the underestimation of the rôle of Lenin and of Leninism as marking a new stage in the struggle for a consistent materialist world-outlook. This was the particular weakness of the Deborin school, and this was precisely the reason why the magazine, *Under the Banner of Marxism*, failed, under its old leadership, to fulfil the task placed before it by V. I. Lenin. That is precisely why the magazine and the Society of Militant Dialectical Materialists must now devote much more attention to the problems of anti-religious propaganda. That is precisely why it is necessary to introduce ideological clarity in the whole of the work of the Union of Militant Atheists and to combat every deviation from the consistent Marxian-Leninist line in our work.

Particularly immense are our tasks in our anti-religious work among the various nationalities in the U.S.S.R. which are only now beginning to awaken to a real life—which are only beginning to develop their own culture. Among many of the nationalities the relics of pre-revolutionary ideology are still great; the influence of the mullah, rabbi, shamans, lamas, etc., is still strong. The literature these nationalities possess is too poor for anti-religious propaganda and they have almost no translated literature. The methods of work among the various nationalities are not yet sufficiently differentiated; plans for this work have not yet been prepared thoroughly. That is why it is necessary to train cadres, to study and explain the various problems, and to conduct a serious work of popularization.

Our entire work must be more closely than ever linked up with the work of the Proletarian Free-Thinkers International. The atheist movement has made giant strides in many countries. No punitive measures against the Proletarian Free-Thinkers International can stop this mass movement now that it has begun. The suppression of the League of Militant Atheists in Germany, as many observers, even from the bourgeois camp, admit, only led to the further strengthening of godlessness, to open defections from the Church, to withdrawal from the

parishes, etc. The growth of godlessness in the United States, the closing of churches in other countries, are inevitable accompaniments of the decay of capitalism. Of course, in these countries, too, the priests are trying to adapt themselves to the social changes that are taking place. Whenever necessary they even flirt with socialist theories. But the exposure of the rôle of the Church and of religion will proceed at a growing pace in the countries of capitalism and create a mighty army of militant atheists throughout the world.

The only country in which the anti-religious movement is able to develop openly, broadly, unhindered is the U.S.S.R. Our experience is of the greatest importance to every nation. We must never forget that by our work we are rendering assistance to our foreign comrades. We must deeply internationalize our work so that every atheist should regard his work as part of our international struggle against religion and the Church.

The League of Militant Atheists has always closely linked its work with that of the Proletarian Free-Thinkers International. In the columns of the Press of the League of Militant Atheists we inform our members and the workers generally of the work of the League, and of the struggle taking place within the Proletarian Free-Thinkers International. The delegates of our League took a most vigorous part in the defence of this international, against the demoralizing petty-bourgeois influence of the social-fascist leaders of the type of Sivers, Hartwig, etc. The latter sought to utilize the international in order to subject the entire atheist movement to the interests of the bourgeoisie, to deprive atheist propaganda of its revolutionary sting, to convert the militant atheism of the masses of the workers and peasants into a liberal movement of bourgeois free-thinkers. We have exposed their rôle. We did not allow the Siverses and Hartwigs to convert the Proletarian Free-Thinkers International into an appendage of the bourgeoisie. Thanks to this, the International continues to exist and grow throughout the world as an organisation of militant atheists. It is our duty to do even more than we have done to make the anti-religious movement, not only in the U.S.S.R., but in the capitalist countries as well, a movement of vast millions.

We are entering the sixteenth year of the proletarian revolution with great gains to our account in the field of atheism.

But these gains are insufficient, our work must be improved, consolidated, expanded, deepened. The banner of militant atheism must be raised still higher. Propaganda in favour of militant atheism must be carried on more widely, must become deeper and more serious. The ranks of the militant atheists must be increased to include millions.

Remember that the struggle against religion is a struggle for socialism!

APPENDIX.

LEAGUE OF MILITANT ATHEISTS.

At a meeting representative of all sections of the working-class movement, held in the " Daily Worker " Office on Friday, December 30th, 1932, the following resolution was adopted :—

Considering that the clergy of all creeds and denominations are, with religion as their pretext, following the lead of the Pope in his call for a crusade against the U.S.S.R.; *and that* these their activities can end, logically, only in a malicious and bloody assault upon, not only the U.S.S.R., but also the militant, revolutionary working-class movement everywhere.

Considering also that this crusade can be met, checked, and defeated by nothing less than the maximum attainable unity of a conscious, direct, and organised resistance thereto by the workers themselves.

And that this united front of resistance to the Black Army of Reaction cannot adequately be built so long as any considerable section of the working-class movement (or the leadership thereof) remains under the influence of the clergy, the churches, or religious ideology.

We, therefore, being participators in and sympathisers with the emancipation struggle of the workers,

RESOLVE :—

That we hereby constitute ourselves a Provisional Council to arrange for the inauguration of a British Section of the Proletarian Freethinkers' International, with the following objects :—

(1) To arouse and organise *an unflinching resistance* to every variety of clerical and religious attack upon, and slander or misrepresentation of, the militant working-class movement in general, and the U.S.S.R. in particular.

(2) To vindicate *the policy of the U.S.S.R. in regard to Religion and the Churches* against all and every attack and

misrepresentation; and to urge the universal adoption by the working-class movement of the principle upon which that policy is based, namely, *the complete Separation of Church and State, and the complete exclusion of Religion from the School.*

(3) To expose the Churches, their creeds and the Religious ideology they have fostered, as objectively and subjectively agencies for the defence of the established bourgeois order of society; and, as such, passive or active *barriers to the emancipation of the working-class.*

(4) To expose the Charity of the Churches, and the whole of their so-called " social welfare " work as *demoralising and degrading to employed and unemployed alike*, individually and collectively. To labour actively in all available ways to counteract these and other efforts of the churches to create and maintain sectarian divisions in the ranks of the workers.

(5) To promote the growth of international solidarity among the oppressed of all lands by combating actively each and every *religion-fostered race-hatred* or assertion of race or national superiority. In this connection to expose and oppose persistently the insidious, demoralising and reactionary imperialist policy of the Christian Missions to the " Heathen."

(6) To combat actively every attempt to adulterate Socialism with Religion, or to prostitute Science to the ends of the Churches and Religion. As a prime means to both these ends to promote and encourage by every available means the study and development of the *Historical Materialism* indelibly associated with the names of Marx, Engels and Lenin; and to vindicate it against all misrepresentation.

(7) To promote and encourage in all available ways the *cultural self-development of the workers* and their resistance to superstition of every kind as a necessary concomitant of their practical, political and industrial struggles for immediate betterment and ultimate emancipation.

Copies of the above, with form of application for membership, may be had from the Secretary, L.M.A., c/o Workers' Bookshop, 16, King Street, London, W.C.2.

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